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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the history of parent education in the United States and describes a mother-toddler program designed to help young mothers acquire knowledge and skills in child rearing through modeling, counseling and discussion. Included are reviews of current methods of education for child rearing, the need for programs to aid young parents, and the use of group discussion as a technique for educating parents. The development and implementation of a program for 10 mothers and their toddlers is described in detail. Phenomena found to be unique to a group of mothers and toddlers were: the issues of separation, style of participation, and the nature and development of the leader. These and other aspects of mother-toddler groups are discussed. Modern urban society offers little opportunity to experience the support system that can exist in intergenerational family relations. Also there is little opportunity to learn about child rearing in traditional ways. (Author/SB)

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Mother-Toddler Groups as a New Source for Parent Education

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in

EDUCATION

by

Madeleine Lieber

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May, 1975

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May, 1975

This work is dedicated to Rose Bromwich who was more than a teacher to me when I began my studies and to Sarah Moskovitz without whose guidance and support I could not have finished. My deepest gratitude is herewith expressed to them both.

Special thanks are also due to my husband, Victor and our children Eli, Pamela and Adam (three former toddlers) for their understanding and patie

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ABSTRACT

Mother-Toddler Groups as a
New Source for Parent Education

by

Madeleine Lieber

Master of Arts in Education

May, 1975

A chronological overview of the literature traces the history of Parent Education in the United States. Current methods of education for child rearing are elaborated and the need for programs to aid young parents is discussed. The use of group discussion as a technique is elaborated and a program for ten mothers and their toddlers is described. Phenomena found to be unique to a group of mothers and toddlers are: the issue of separation, style of participation, the nature and development of the leader. These and other aspects of Mother-Toddler Groups are discussed. Modern urban society offers little opportunity to experience the support system that can exist in intergenerational family relations. Also there is little opportunity to learn about child rearing in traditional ways.

Each member of a Mother-Toddler Group can develop her own unique repertoire of parenting skills through the group experience and with the help of a trained leader.

Introduction

Before starting my own family, I had completed a bachelor's degree at UCLA, acquired a General Elementary Teaching Credential from the State of California and taught in the Los Angeles City Schools. Following the birth of my second child I completed enough units in Nursery Education at UCLA to teach pre-school which I did for three years. All this academic preparation while giving me the wherewithal to pursue a teaching career came in second to the knowledge I acquired raising two youngsters of my own. By the time my third child was born I felt relaxed enough to look at the importance of the very early years in a child's life.

I was chosen to participate in a paraprofessional training program at the Thalians Community Mental Health Center, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles (Reid, Pearce and Brown, 1971). The PIPS (Pre-school and Infant Parenting Service) is a primary preventive program which offers time limited counseling service plus referral within the Mental Health Center when indicated. There is also the PIPS "Warm Line" which is a telephone line staffed by volunteer social workers and child development specialists who are available for consultations (anonymously if desired) on day to day difficulties experienced by young parents. Following my training, working conjointly with social workers, I led time-limited discussion groups for mothers with their toddlers. I have also been a consul-

tant on the "Warm Line" since its inception.

I had found success in dealing with young children and adults and was receiving some training in individual psychodynamics and marital and family dynamics at Cedars-Sinai. At this point I felt that to be able to perform responsibly as a professional in the field of Early Childhood Education (which was my goal) I needed to augment my education and training in educational psychology. In 1970 I was admitted to the Masters' Program in Educational Psychology at the California State University, Northridge.

During my studies I accepted a fieldwork placement which involved establishing a Mother-Toddler Program. Starting with seven mothers two years ago, I now lead three such groups, each with ten mothers.

My familiarity with early parent education in the form of Mother-Toddler Groups made it a natural choice for investigation as a final treatise in graduate study.

Chapter 1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION FOR CHILD REARING INCLUDING REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historically there have been several sources for education for child rearing. The eldest is folk wisdom wherein tried and true methods were passed on to new parents through the family and tribe. When the medical profession began to contribute to the field of parent education with its knowledge of physiology, doctors and other medical workers began to disseminate information on the healthful ways of caring for infants and young children. Church discussion groups and school personel expanded the information available on emotional, social and moral development. Parent Education and training was carried on by way of classes, discussion groups and lectures for parents. Professional, private and public educational organizations and government agencies conducted research studies and pilot programs in an effort to provide new and improved methods of Parent Education for large scale audiences. The behavioral sciences gave us new truths and experts in child growth and development to enhance the field. The growth of Parent Education in this country can be traced chronologically through the literature of the field.

Education for child rearing has undoubtedly existed since mothers and grandmothers have taught their children how to treat infants and toddlers and to pass on knowledge of life-experience and cultural wisdom on child rearing. In our Western civilization, the advent of mechanical printing enabled the word to be spread in even greater quantity than ever before. According to Whiting (1974) printed advice for mothers first existed in medical books. She also found that there are detailed treatises in the English language giving advice and counsel to mothers in print dating from the mid-eighteenth century.

Education for parents in the United States goes back to 1800. Before that time information on child care was disseminated to mothers through importation from Europe where an active program of educating parents already existed. "Maternal Associations" were organized by the wives of missionaries and clergymen in the early 1800's. These were mainly study groups which emphasized bible study and prayer as a means of training children. According to Sunley, (1955) before 1820 mothers regularly met in such groups because they were concerned about the religious and moral improvement of their children. Included in discussion were techniques for "breaking the will," especially by those groups of mothers belonging to the numerous Calvinist and Protestant sects of the time.

During the first half of the 19th century practical advice on infant care became available for the first time from American sources. Breast feeding was advocated but it was acknowledged that for some mothers "artificial feeding" would have to be the choice. There was advice on weaning and cautions against overfeeding which was utilized by many parents, nurses, and older siblings in order to elicit a baby's pleasure response. Warnings were also issued against the overuse of drugs and alcohol which many recommended for use in stopping crying and promoting sleep. Dressing infants in loose clothing so they could move about gradually replaced swaddling which was customary as an effort to duplicate the comfort of the womb. Doctors wrote about toilet training although there was not much information about how long it should take and when it should be initiated. Standards of cleanliness were very high and these of course, had their moral counterpart: "For dirt and indelicacy are frequent companions, and a disregard for the decencies of life is a step toward indifference toward its virtues." (Barwell, 1844).

Masturbation presented a serious problem to the parents of this period. European doctors whose books were read in this country were apparently the originators of warnings of the dire consequences of a child's touching his genitals for purposes other than hygiene.

Apart from books, there were pamphlets and magazines published providing mothers with specific advice on child care. Sunley (1955) points out that Mothers' Magazine, was first published in 1830, Mothers' Assistant in 1841, and Parents' Magazine (not the current publication) ran from 1840-1850.

The nursery and kindergarden movement which emerged during the late 1800's was interested in parent education from its inception. Herbert Spencer, an influential writer of the time directed much of his writing to the education of parents in 1861, in his Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical, he ranked education "to perform parental duties" ahead of such objectives as that of being a good citizen.

The oldest organization in the United States having a continuous parent education program, the Society for the Study of Child Nature (now known as the Child Study Association of America) was founded in 1888. It was founded by five mothers at the suggestion of Dr. Felix Adler and the earliest programs consisted in studying the works of authorities of the time: Rousseau, Spencer, Froebel and Montessori. Later, G. Stanley Hall and Havelock Ellis were added to the list. Today, that association still works to strengthen family and community life through mental health education. It also sponsors counseling and discussion groups for parents.

Another group formed at the same time was the Association of Collegiate Alumnae now the American Association of University Women. It had as its aim the promotion of educational advancement of women and the raising of educational standards including those for parent education. Today AAUW has among its functions a research service that receives and distributes information about education.

During the period of 1890 to 1900 the National Congress of Parents and Teachers was founded. Originally organized as the Congress of Mothers, its statement of purpose included the education of parents in child development.

The printed media carrying materials for parents and beginning in this decade include Good Housekeeping, Ladies' Home Journal, and Woman's Home Companion. According to Lighty and Bowman (1939) such magazines and others of the period carried articles on "Night Terrors of Children," "Parents and the Nervous Child," and the like. Large numbers of parents were beginning to be reached and according to Lighty and Bowman, mothers of privileged classes were pretty sure to be in touch with one or another of the organizations interested in her conduct toward her children. For the less privileged mothers there were the settlement houses with groups for mothers and kindergarden mothers' clubs instituted under Froebel's influence.

The first twenty years of the 1900's, were an import-

ant era in initiating federal government support for parent education. Although parent education in this country was initiated somewhat like a folk movement to the extent that it "...derived its impulse from the interest and initiative of parents themselves..." (Langmuir, 1933), private organizations did not enter into large-scale parent education activities until after 1920 (Brim, 1968). There were four key programs developed during this period which describe the extent of federal government involvement in parent education. The first was the establishment of the Children's Bureau in 1912. The first White House Conference on Child Welfare, the 1909 Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, resulted in the writing of the Child's Charter and the creation of the Bureau. The Children's Bureau was placed in the Department of Labor in 1913; it is now part of the Social and Rehabilitation Service in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. It offers advice and grants to state health and welfare agencies to broaden and improve maternal and child health, family and child welfare, and crippled children's services. In 1914 the first edition of Infant Care was published confirming the interest of the Bureau in parent education since its inception.

The second federal program authorized by the federal government was the Smith-Lever Act which in 1914 provided for 2,000 County Home Demonstration Agents as part of the Department of Agriculture.

These agents carried on demonstration projects in homemaking, home management, and child care, among other duties.

In 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act defined "homemaking" as a basic vocation for women. This act provided that education for homemaking, which included classes in child care, was to be administered by the Office of Education.

In 1918, the fourth key federal government program of this period was begun. The United States Public Health Service began support of programs of parent education with special emphasis on the health of children.

The period of 1900-1920 was also an important era because many types of organizations were founded which would later play a major role in parent education. In 1911, the first child study center in America was begun in the State University of Iowa under the leadership of Carl E. Seashore. In 1917, under a grant from the state legislature, the Child Welfare Research Station was established in Iowa.

In 1909, the National Committee on Mental Hygiene was founded by Clifford Beers. This group was mainly concerned with improving treatment and with helping people learn more about mental illness. In 1950 it merged with other groups to form the current National Association for Mental Health. During the past decades this group stimulated certain educational programs for parents designed to promote mental health.

The year 1916 saw the first cooperative nursery school opened at the University of Chicago. This was the forerunner of the many current cooperative nursery schools which, according to Brim (1968) engage in parent education.

The Committee on Marriage and the Home of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America (now the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America) was organized in 1909 to stimulate churches to develop programs of education for family life. Most of the major religious groups issue periodicals, and conduct other educational projects dealing with all phases of family activity.

During these years, the concept of the child was thus, that he was "...endowed with strong and dangerous impulses. These were notably autoerotic, maturbatory, and thumbsucking..." (Wolfenstein, 1955). The image of the child at this period was that he was "...centripetal, tending to get pleasure from his own body." (Wolfenstein, 1955). Mothers were urged to wage a relentless battle against the child's sinful nature. She was advised, in 1914, by Infant Care, to use restraints such as tying the child's feet to opposite sides of the crib, pinning nightgown sleeves to the sheets, using a patent cuff to hold the elbow stiff, and covering the child's hands during sleep to combat such offenses as self-stimulation

or thumbsucking. (Wolfenstein, 1955). During this time period there was a clear-cut distinction between what the baby "needed," his legitimate requirements, whether it is essential to his health and well-being, on the one hand, and what the baby "wanted," his illegitimate pleasure strivings, on the other. This was illustrated for instance, in the question of whether or not to pick up a baby when he cried. In 1914, it was important to discern whether he really needed something or whether he wanted something. The baby who was picked up when he cried, held and rocked when he wanted it, soon grew into a tyrant, according to Infant Care in 1914. Early indulgence was seen as the way to make the baby more demanding as he grew older. The mother of 1914 was told via Infant Care that parents should not play with their young children. A young, delicate baby needs rest and quiet, and even with a robust child the means used to make the baby laugh (tickling, kissing, or tossing) may make him restless. The dangerousness of play was related to that of the ever present sensual impulses which must be constantly guarded against.

The period of 1920-1930 saw a substantial growth of parent education. Over seventy-five major organizations conducted parent education programs (NSSE, 1929). Among them were: national organizations such as the Child Study Association of America, university-based and other

research programs such as the Institute of Child Welfare at the University of Minnesota, teachers' colleges and normal schools, such as Teachers College at Columbia University, women's colleges, for example, Vassar, home economic divisions of land-grant colleges, state departments of vocational education, state departments of education, public school systems, private schools, nursery schools, social agencies, child guidance agencies, health agencies, and religious organizations.

A notably influential organization for parent education was the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial established in 1918. It continued for a decade and some of the funds left at its termination in 1928 were used to create the Spelman Fund. The Memorial, in 1923, initiated a parent education program which was continued by the Spelman Fund. Funds were provided for the establishment of child study centers such as the Institute for Child Research at Teachers College, the Institutes of Child Welfare at Minnesota and California, and the Child Welfare Research Station in Iowa. It was planned that such organizations would conduct research and provide sound findings in parent education directly to parents. The Memorial also supported training programs in parent education through fellowships for home economics students in nursery school settings who would work directly with parents.

The Memorial had a warm relationship with the Child Study Association of America from its inception, and in 1925 two events were held which focused the country's attention on parent education and the growing child study movement. These were the Conference on Modern Parenthood which was attended by 1,500 persons (NSSE, 1929) and the first national conference of professionals working in parent education held in the United States. At the close of the conference and with the aid of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, the Child Study Association of America organized a National Council of Parent Education which had as its aim further development of the field of parent education. In 1953, it became part of the National Council on Family Relations which, first organized in 1938, brought together in one organization the leaders in research, teaching and professional services in the field of marriage and the family. It publishes Marriage and Family Living, a quarterly containing articles for parents and professional workers.

At the close of this decade the third White House Conference had as one of its major committees, the Committee on the Family and Parent Education. This Committee's report covered several areas of parent education. One subcommittee, Housing and Home Management, included in its recommendations the call for promoting means for informing parents and recognized the value of

discussion programs. Local home information centers were urged to provide information on all phases of home improvement including classes for adult education in home care of children. (White House Conference, 1931). There were recommendations on home safety, health and sanitation of mattresses, size of beds, daily schedules the assistance of fathers in the home, budgeting, nutrition, health needs, clothing, and the personnel phases of family life. The White House Conference Report of 1931 presents a definitive description of activities, and analysis of issues at that time.

The beginning of the 1930's saw a tremendous expansion of program activities and professional research in the field of education for child rearing. In 1935 the U.S. Office of Education catalogued the public and private agencies which had programs in parent education; the list covered 53 pages. (Brim, 1968). Much growth in the field occurred in program expansion in the public school and in nursery school and pre-school settings. These were supported by the activities of the Works Progress Administration during the depression. The WPA made available teachers, group leaders, and other trained personnel to interested groups to present basic materials on child behavior.

The National Council of Parent Education, supported by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, was the focal point of training activities. By 1932, courses in parent education were offered in one or more colleges and universities in at least 25 states. (Bossard, 1954). These programs were largely concentrated in academic settings having child development and child welfare research stations, with accompanying parent education programs. In the 1933 edition of the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Mary Fisher Langmuir wrote an article on parent education outlining as the purpose of the movement "...to foster insight on the part of parents into their own personalities and into their family relationships." She went on to state that in 1933 the professional status of the parent education movement arose from methodology and point of view rather than from content, since in order to help parents meet actual situations and problems it would be necessary to introduce them to knowledge from hygiene, nutrition, sanitation, psychology, mental hygiene, education and others. During the 1930's professionals in the field attempted to serve children and parents by making them aware of new knowledge and techniques of child care. Also, parents of the period were beginning to realize that traditional methods of rearing children were not fitting individuals to meet the complicated social and economic conditions

of the time and were turning to relevant branches of knowlege for guidance. Langmuir also noted that emphasis in the 1930's had shifted to relationships within the family from predominant interest in the child.

The major development of this decade was in the area of professional research. Two organizations were primarily responsible for the bulk of the findings. At the Child Welfare Research Station of the State University of Iowa, a series of widely influencial studies were made under the leadership of Ralph Ojemann. The series included research on the validity of information given to parents, the effectiveness of parent education programs, and the comparative success of different methods, such as lectures versus group discussions (Brim, 1968). The National Council of Parent Education was the other organization with a major research program. It was the publisher of a professional journal, Parent Education, for the five years from 1934 to 1938. The journal carried authoritative discussions of theoretical and research issues in parent education, and served as a medium for the exchange of information on professional activities in the United States. The Council also supported several research studies. One was Helen Witmer's The Field of Parent Education, which presented a critical study of the research data on parent education up to 1934 and suggested research topics requiring study.

The second was May Shirley's Can Parents Educate One Another? which was an early attempt to evaluate the relative effectiveness of different parent education methods. In addition, the Council operated a fellowship program in which 122 fellowships were granted between 1926 and 1934.

During the early 1930's some professional students of the family had questioned, through their writings, the permanency of traditional family life and the desirability of parental, in contrast to institutional, child rearing (Brim, 1968). The Family by Edward Reuter and Jessie R. Runner illustrates this point of view: "Numerous organizations operating on a quasi- or pseudoscientific level--child welfare stations, parent education organizations, character education institutes, family research stations, and the like, are motivated by fear of change and a desire to preserve or reinstate the old and familiar arrangements that are apparently crumbling to ruin."

Within ten years this view point itself crumbled when growing evidence of the durability and importance of the traditional parent-child socialization pattern came to light. Anthropological research on other cultures, wartime (Freud and Burlingham, 1944), and earlier studies of institutionalization on children, and an unpredictable upturn in the national birth rate, served to reaffirm the importance of, and interest in, the traditional family

pattern (Brim, 1968).

But the late 1930's did see a decrease in the amount of interest in parent education. A causal factor in the decrease of professional activities in the field was the termination, in 1938, of the Spelman Fund's support of parent education. Without this financial support the National council of Parent Education disbanded in 1938. Fortunately, because of increased support in parent education by public organizations such as state departments of education, public health services, and the like the extent of parent education programs was not effected.

An important shift in the parent education field was taking place and noted in 1937 by Menchan. He wrote that the new direction being taken in the field of education for child rearing was towards concern for mothers and fathers, where before it had focused on the child. He felt approaching parents in a group was more helpful than an approach to individual families. The discussion method, according to Menchan, was most effective and that written materials were helpful as a follow-up. Menchan felt that parents needed to participate in the solution of their problems and that recipes eliminated the possibility of a problem-solving approach. In his book, Introduction to Child Development and Parent Education, Menchan states that major problem areas for parents included: the potent desire by children for the

attention of their parents, sex education, and the tendency to compare one child with another. His book covers knowledge of the physical processes from pregnancy, through birth and the early years of growth and information on nutrition, language, social development, mental testing and growth, and marriage and birth control. In all it is an all-inclusive source for both parents and professionals (which I as a parent education professional still find relevant today).

In Parents and Children Go to School by Baruch, published in 1939, the author states that a major or working goal of parent education programs was that of comforting parents and of making them feel secure. She stated that parents are people in their own right, and that the home and school should be coordinated to guide the important early years of a child's life wisely. Baruch also stated that there was not enough interpenetration of the field of mental hygiene and the field of education and not enough interpenetration of the education of parents and the education of children. It seems that for the first time, at the close of the 1930's, the thought was put forward that parents could be eased from the idea that theirs alone was the task of rearing children without help, and that ignorance in technique was no transgression.

The report of the Committee on the Infant and Preschool Child published in 1936 included a survey of three thousand American families. Section III of the report dealt with Education and Training of both children and parents. Within the 3,000 families was a representative sample of seven different social levels based on the scale of paternal occupation developed at the University of Minnesota from the Barr scale and the Taussig scale (White House Conference, 1936). The seven classes used were:

I Professional

II Semiprofessional and managerial

III Clerical, skilled trades, and retail business

IV Farmers

V Semiskilled occupations, minor clerical positions, and minor business

VI Slightly skilled trades and other occupations requiring little training or ability

VII Day laborers of all classes

In summary, the survey found that about half the parents in the group had read no books on child care in the year preceding the interview; proportion varied from 25 percent in Class I to 75 percent in Class VII. The higher classes, it was found, were more likely to read pamphlets and articles on child care in magazines and newspapers, and fathers read less than the mothers on this subject.

It was reported that very few of the fathers attended parent teacher associations or child study groups but one-half of the mothers did. The latter were more popular among the mothers in the upper classes.

The years of 1941 to 1950 saw major growth in the use of parent education by workers in the field of mental health who saw it as a means to prevent mental illness. As early as 1930, the National Mental Hygiene Committee and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers together published an outline for a course of child study with suggested readings for parents interested in understanding themselves and their children. It was titled Parent Education: The First Year Book of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (Brim, 1968).

During the war, mental health screening procedures were refined and they showed such a prevalence of mental illness that the immediate postwar period saw passage of the National Mental Health Act in 1946. Under this act, each state received federal funds to operate community mental health programs many of which included parent education. In 1947, the first annual Institute for Workers in Parent Education was held under joint sponsorship of the National Committee on Parent Education and the Child Study Association of America. The Child Study Association still holds such annual institutes and also publishes the Parent Education Exchange Bulletin.

Among the popular literature of the time was Living with Children (Chittenden, 1944). It is an introduction to the field of child development for students and parents. It presents information on the various stages of growth from early childhood through adolescence with knowledge of the physiological, emotional, social and play needs of each age group. Chittenden saw the family as a laboratory of Democracy with each member contributing something to family living. Through this vehicle basic truths could be exemplified and taught to children. Some of the principles to be learned in a family, according to Chittenden, were: each member has a part in making the rules, there is respect for differences, there is no disgrace in failure, and feelings are accepted. So apart from seeing that children were fed, sheltered, clothed and loved, the author felt that parents had the duty of raising their children to be responsive and responsible adults.

Change in the perception of the child from earlier periods was noted in Infant Care, the bulletin of the Children's Bureau (Wolfenstein, 1955). In the years from 1928 to 1938 the baby had been described as being full of dangerous impulses. In 1942 and 1945 Infant Care portrayed the baby as a more diffuse and moderate character. Where in early years parents had been warned of the dangers of handling of the genitals, the erogenous zones

did not have such focal attraction in the 1940s. Wolfenstein stated: "The baby is interested in exploring his world. If he happens to put his thumb in his mouth or to touch his genitals, these are merely incidents, and unimportant ones at that, in his over-all exploratory progress." The Infant Care bulletin of 1942 states: "The baby will not spend much time handling his genitals if he has other interesting things to do." (Wolfenstein, 1955). In the early part of the century it was thought and taught by many, that what was enjoyable was wicked or deleterious. By the 1940s there had been a change. One author of the period wrote: "What is pleasant is also good." (Wolfenstein, 1955). Play became associated with harmless and healthful motor and exploratory activities. It was felt that play could be fused with all the activities of life. "Play and singing make both mother and baby enjoy the routine of life," stated Infant Care in 1945. One wonders with such urging, if parents of that time did not begin to feel somewhat pressured into enjoying their children. Formerly a mother's evaluation of herself was based on whether or not she was doing the right or necessary things. With new expectations for enjoyment of mothering the degree to which she enjoyed her role were related to deep personal feelings about her child, feelings which may not always be under voluntary control.

The 1943 edition of the Encyclopedia of Child Guidance (Winn, 1943) included an extensive article on Parent Education by Olive A. Cooper, M.D.. She noted that some leading writers in the field were addressing themselves more to the emotional factors involved in child rearing. J. D. Abbot, a leader in the field of Parent Education stated: "...The information parents have received has been on a verbal scale and on an intellectual basis...We want to teach them how to apply material to the care of their own particular child and to give them an understanding of their child's impulses, desires, and needs." (Winn, 1943). Cooper went on in her article to state: "Because of the many and varied emotional factors inherent in a parent-child relationship, it is obvious why a presentation of factual material as a form of Parent Education may not be availing. It is only when we think in terms of attitudes and understand their deeper implications that we shall be able to make a worthwhile contribution to a parent in his job of rearing children." (Winn, 1943).

The year 1945 saw the publication of The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care by Dr. Benjamin Spock. It is now updated and revised as Baby and Child Care (Spock, 1962). This book in its various forms and languages has, over the years, remained the most widely recommended handbook for parents ever published.

Spock's purpose for writing this volume is stated in his introduction to parents: "This book is not meant to be used for diagnosis or treatment; it's only meant to give you a general understanding of children, their troubles, and their needs...Every child is different, every parent is different, every illness or behavior problem is somewhat different from every other. All I can do is describe the most common developments and problems, in the most general terms. Remember that you know a lot about your child and I don't know anything about him." (Spock, 1962). This writer would venture to guess that over the years millions of parents have turned to this all-inclusive volume on child rearing at one time or another for answers to questions and that a large percentage of them consider it their primary manual. Spock is easy to read and particularly easy to come back to since in his philosophy he states: "The fact is that child rearing is a long, hard job and that parents are just as human as their children." (Spock, 1962).

The decade from 1950 to 1960 saw the continued shift in interest in mental health and other areas of human concern from treatment to prevention. Parent education, which was employed primarily as a preventive technique, grew as a field in both breadth and recognition. At the national level there were several programs sponsored by governmental agencies many of which continue to the

present time.

The program in the Department of Agriculture was a continuation of the program begun in 1914 as a result of the Smith-Lever Act. Parent education in that department occurred in the context of the extension service affiliated with the land-grant colleges in several states. Written materials on food, nutrition and other aspects of homemaking were published and training programs were held to prepare county agents for leadership in educational programs.

Within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, established in 1953, the Office of Education, the Social Security Administration, and the Public Health Service carry on programs which were begun in the 1950s. The Division of State and Local School Systems in the Office of Education aims to improve the counseling of parents by teachers (Brim, 1968). Relevant materials were and are published, conferences and workshops are held and direct consultation is available. As a result of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 the Home Economics Education branch administers certain funds to state departments of education and acts as consultant. A major emphasis is on parent education which most frequently takes the form of adult education classes administered by home economists in the departments of education at the state or community level.

The Children's Bureau which was transferred to the Social Security Administration in 1946, continued to promote the health and welfare of children and to publish the famous Infant Care. Through 1955 almost 60 million copies of that publication had been distributed.

Within the Public Health Service the most prominent activity was carried out by the National Institute of Mental Health. During the 1950s with its funds for research in the field of mental health, the Institute carried out a number of large-scale studies seeking to evaluate the effects of parent education.

The National Congress of Parents and Teachers in late 1957 had more than nine million members and in 1970 had over ten and one-half million members. Its thousands of parent study groups continue to be active in parent education and it is probably the largest membership organization in the field. It's National PTA Bulletin and The PTA Magazine contain materials for parents on child rearing. In addition to these monthlies, special materials for parents in the form of topical pamphlets are published.

More and more publications became available for parents as well as students and professionals involved in parent education. Bossard's Parent and Child came out in 1953. He was interested in the sociological aspects of family life and wrote of the influence on children

by members of the household other than parents (siblings, grandparents or household help.) At the conclusion of the 1950 White House Conference, Bossard stated that healthy personality is not definitely established at one age period, but can be strengthened or weakened at any time. Bossard stressed the importance of the relationship between individuals working and living together when he said: "...the feelings for children on the part of parents and professional people are more important than the technique they use." (Bossard, 1953).

Difficulties in parenting were beginning to be recognized clinically in the 50's (Spock, 1954b). Parents reported anxiety and doubt over facing the care of their first child. Concerns that ignorance of the latest "scientific theory" would hinder attempts to raise children properly and mothers' resentment about the duel role of homemaker and parent prevented many couples from fully enjoying their children. Spock felt that even with the large amount of knowledge available individuals concerning themselves with child rearing and its problems should be doing a vastly better job in children's adjustment. (Spock, 1954b). In an article on new findings in the field of Psychology, Anna Wolf stated that there was a need for scientific knowledge to be translated into parents' day-to-day living with children. (Wolf, 1954). She went on to say that dis-

cussion and guidance were still needed to teach how the primary and selfish drives of young children needed to be controlled and directed for each child's best development.

In 1953, as the result of a grant by the Fund for Adult Education to the University of Chicago, a Parent Education Project was launched under the direction of Ethel Kawin. Approximately 1300 study-discussion groups were launched in Parenthood in a Free Nation programs. After eight years and three volumes a systematic course was designed to help parents acquire knowledge of child development and understanding of children's needs at various stages of development (Kawin, 1954). The general aim of the Project was to develop mature, responsible citizens in a free society. The series was designed to help parents acquire a philosophy of parenthood. The basic concepts were formulated in such a way that there were easily recognizable implications and applications for daily life situations of parents and children. A manual published by the Project was also made available for those interested in training for parent education.

Another volume written by Benjamin Spock was published in 1954. It promised to carry on where Baby and Child Care left off. Dr. Spock Talks With Mothers (Spock, 1954a) was written in a very relaxed style offering parents assurance as well as practical advice.

He counseled parents to refrain from feeling pressured into choosing between extremes of discipline and permissiveness and "...to relax, use their own good sense and enjoy their children more fully." (Spock, 1954a). Spock was also involved in creating a pictorial representation of a child's first year. (Spock and Reinhart, 1955). In it, photographs by Wayne Miller portray the pregnancy, birth and infancy of a young child. The comments and interpretations offer sound knowledge for parents as well as the sharing of passionate emotions of the young mother and father.

Another volume widely used was written by Selma Fraiberg. In The Magic Years (Fraiberg, 1959) the story of personality development during the first five years of life is described and typical problems that emerge with each developmental stage are discussed. Fraiberg wrote from a psychoanalytic point of view but her style is liberally sprinkled with intellectual breadth and good sense. Her warm understanding of both childhood and parenthood help in providing understanding for parents who find her book most helpful in learning how a young child copes with his ever-widening world.

Though many authors of parent education books have been sensitive to parent anxiety, there have been materials that have possibly heightened rather than alleviated concern. As a parent acquires more develop-

mental information about children there is the possibility of increased worry and concern about the child. A book or article discussing child development yet ignoring the parental condition in all its manifestations is lacking as an aid in parent education. An example of this is Child Behavior. (Ilg and Ames, 1955). The Gessell Institute has as its aim the gathering of evidence to broaden knowledge of the laws of human growth. (Ilg and Ames, 1955). Although full of developmental information Child Behavior offers very little advice or comfort. Typical behavior is described and discussed with little sensitivity to the trials of the average parent.

A most comprehensive work on parent education was published in 1959. The Child Study Association of America proposed that the Russell Sage Foundation support a study of the field of parent education from the point of view of social science. Education for Child Rearing (Brim, 1968) provides an organized presentation of the field of parent education. The first part deals with assumptions and objectives of parent education, while the second section describes procedures and reports their results. The evaluation asks many questions and points to ways in which social science knowledge and ideas could be efficiently applied to problems of practice in the field and to problems on which basic

research is needed. Almost twenty years after publication this book still serves a unique function as a comprehensive introduction to the field.

The past fifteen years has seen the field of parent education evolve to a stage where programs are reaching more parents than ever before. Parent education is taking place to a greater extent especially in an effort to help those parents who are culturally or economically deprived. Also there are many programs, public and private especially for those families with children who are physically or emotionally handicapped or who have learning difficulties.

The various federal programs mentioned above continue to offer broad scale technical assistance and guidance with aid to public and private organizations in the area of children's services (Appalachian Regional Commission, 1970).

The Child Study Association of America is still the only noncommercial national organization devoted solely to parent education. Its workshops and publications are for parents and professionals alike. The Association's emphasis is training in the use of its educational methods, its major concerns being human relations, child development and parent education. With 3,000 national members, the Association attracts nearly 2,000 parents, educators, psychologists, social workers and physicians

to its annual conference. Most programs of the Child Study Association are designed for eventual continuation as regular curriculum offerings of universities with only consultive services from Child Study (Buchmeuller, 1971).

Parents Institute, which publishes Parents' Magazine, not only carries materials on child rearing, but has developed complete programs for child study groups. The Institute offers advisory services to subscribers and publishes materials for parents interested in setting up study groups themselves.

The Hogg Foundation's parent education through the public schools focuses on the family unit. Classes are designed for mental health rather than the negative--against mental illness. The Foundation group and family life educators work towards helping families find their own style of child rearing. (Spoon and Southwick, 1973).

The Children's Bureau as part of the Welfare Administration has been publishing materials for parents since 1918. Understanding childrens needs is felt, by the Bureau, to be helpful to mothers and fathers by giving them more confidence in themselves as parents. (Dittmann 1968). A notable addition to the usual exposition of information of physical and social growth in the Bureau's latest publication is the following: "...There have been great advances in knowledge about, and understanding of,

emotional and psychological growth and needs." (Dittman, 1968). Thus we find discussion of moving to a new home, going to the hospital and when a new baby comes. There is also supportive advice on getting special help early and family planning.

The interests of individual professionals with widespread following have advanced the parent education field. Bruno Bettelheim addresses himself more to parents in his works on parent education than many of his peers. Including himself in the ranks of parents he states: "...I have had to learn the hard way what all other parents also discover: that the most appropriate advice, the most carefully explained theory, is of little use when it comes to handling specific everyday events with a child. The over-all theories are just too broad, or permit of too many different ways of application, to offer more than a guiding idea in an instance where a very specific action is needed. Where the advice is specific, it is usually so specific that it never quite fits the situation confronting one. Moreover, the parent described in such recommendations is not quite the type of person any of us feels himself to be, and the child described in print is not quite the particular child with whom we must deal. After all, behind all our actions in a given situation is the whole of our past life experience, which soon begins to influence our view

of what we are doing to our child and of what he is doing to us. The same is true for our child: he, too, reacts to our intervention in terms of his past experiences, many of which we ourselves have provided or shaped. Yet no advice can allow for all these considerations without becoming so general and vague as to say that we must act in terms of our own and the child's history and personality. However true this may be, it does not tell us what we should actually do." (Bettelheim, 1962). In his book, Dialogues with Mothers Bettelheim says that both parents share in the rearing of children. The father in a family must support the mother as she (in most cases) assumes the heavier burden in transacting their philosophy for child rearing. Where parent education becomes of use to parents, according to Bettelheim, is in helping parents increase the clarification of what they want for their child; and how "...in everyday practice, to make this desire, slow step by step, become reality." (Bettelheim, 1962). In his work with parents in a series of group discussions, Dr. Bettelheim discovered that the answers to problems parents thought out for themselves based on their own real feelings and common sense most often agreed with the experts. When they did not, mothers and fathers were more successful when they acted on their own understanding and respect for their children and their problems.

A very recent book (Callahan, 1973) boldly attempts to analyze the modern American parent. Callahan labels parenting a serious and intimate subject. She says that there is deep structure and universal patterning in the process of parenting but culturally the modern American parent still has some roots in the Puritan ethic which marked our early years. There is still the mobility-- physically, economically and socially-- that characterized early American history and she quotes from Erikson describing the frontier family in its similarity to today's: "The same families, the same mothers, were forced to prepare men and women who would take root in the community life and the gradual class stratification of the new villages and towns and at the same time to prepare these children for the possible physical hardships of homesteading on the frontiers...They must be prepared for any number of extreme opposites in milieu, and always ready to seek new goals and to fight for them in merciless competition." (Erikson, 1963). "Perhaps the most characteristic and enduring problem of American parents seeking perfection in themselves and their children is the constant change and mobility of our society." (Callahan, 1973). Parenting involves protecting and nurturing children and then allowing them, at the appropriate time, to separate and grow up independently. She believes there is little so-called parental

instinct or innately programmed mothering or fathering in humans. "Human parents must learn to parent, they must be self-conscious. With man, cultural learning is crucial, and in parenting culture is transmitted." (Callahan, 1973).

Each era has had its share of public and private modes of parent education. Each era has had its share of manuals and primers on child development. Not to be lagging, the past fifteen years has had its own share of how-to-do-it books (Ginott 1965, Gordon 1970, Dodson 1970, Azrin and Foxx 1974).

Parents, because they were once parented and lately find themselves in that role with all its emotional intimacies and conflicts, may seek guidance for solutions to the inevitable problems that arise. Parent education has and always will try to fulfill that role. Decisions do have to be made inevitably and Callahan summarizes this eventuallity when she advises parents thus: "I believe in trusting primarily to one's intelligence, head, and the best theory, but however you arrive at a decision, it <u>is</u> important to act confidently. You get this confidence from the fact that you are doing the best you know how to do With it goes a healthy ability to tolerate a self-questioning which is open to improvement. A delicate balance of a lot of self-trust and a little self dis-trust is needed in all of life's

transactions, including parenthood." (Callahan, 1973).

Two different thrusts exist in the literature for parents. One, the approach of the cook book, how-to-do-it, step-by-step receipes to solve the myriad problems of child rearing. In the last decade these are exemplified by the works of Ginott and Gordon. Second, the more longview approach which is advocated most recently by Bettelheim and Callahan. The second thrust lends itself more to parent education. In an effort to aid parents understand behavior (theirs and their children's) these works advocate formulation of a personal style of parenting. This enables parents to compose an approach to child rearing, one which within its scope holds answers and solutions suitable for each individual and his or her own beliefs.

Chapter 2: CURRENT METHODS OF PARENT EDUCATION

The choice of methods in parent education has grown with the ever-widening field and through successful experimentation with new and different methods. The basic methods consist of three different types: Mass Media, Counseling, and Group Discussion procedures.

1) Mass Media

The expression "mass media" usually refers to methods reaching a mass audience. The parent educator cannot know each person as a parent or even as an individual. This approach includes a wide range of educational activities including books, pamphlets, magazines, plays, films, lectures, and radio and television.

Books for parents about child care can be authored by one individual or by a group of writers. They may also be written under the auspices of organizations. Walking into a bookstore and approaching the shelves given over to books related to parenthood, one is confronted with shelf after shelf of hundreds of books on this subject. New titles are added each year and the Sunday newspapers' supplements on books often feature the latest books written by the more popular authors. (The review of literature section of this paper mentions more specifically authors and titles of volumes on education for parenthood).

The number of pamphlets directed to parents either

sold or given away each year is estimated to be in the neighborhood of 25 million (Brim, 1968). Under government auspices examples are the publications of the Children's Bureau and the publications of the state extension services of the Department of Agriculture (Dept. of HEW, 1970). The Children's Bureau publication Infant Care, is probably its most well-known pamphlet. The Bureau, however, does publish and distribute about twenty other titles. The various states' services related to young children and parent education publish about 500 additional leaflets and pamphlets.

The commercial organization Science Research Associates, publishes three major series of pamphlets one of which is specifically prepared for parents. These booklets cover many of the same subject areas as other mass media such as health, sex education, sibling relations; they also deal with the topics of living with a handicapped child and guiding the gifted child, areas frequently omitted in other publications.

The Child Study Association of America consistently publishes pamphlets of a high professional quality. Although these works are generally addressed to professionals in the field of parent education or more sophisticated and educated parents they do set a high standard for pamphlet preparation in other parent education organizations.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children publishes pamphlets in support of the education and development of young children many of which are written in an informal style which can be enjoyed by parents and professionals alike.

Local health centers and clinics usually have in their waiting rooms, materials in pamphlet form for parent to read and take. Most of these are directed to health needs such as preventive innoculations and birth control but some do touch on other areas such as expectations of different aged children and preparation of young children for school.

There is a great extent and variety of magazine material for parents. Parents' Magazine has a circulation of over two million. Professionals find that the content and quality of materials in it is quite acceptable. Magazines which lay greater emphasis in their articles on the physical care and safety of infants and young children are Children Today (published by the Childrens' Bureau), Baby Talk, Your New Baby, and American Baby. The National Congress of Parents and Teachers publishes the National Parent-Teacher. It is available through subscription and it carries guides for discussion groups, special articles, and regular features prepared by experts in various fields relating to child development.

The Child Study Association of America publishes Child Study. Each issue is usually devoted to a specific topic such as children's reading, prejudice and the like.

Other magazines carry significant parent education material in their special sections on Education or Science from time to time. These include Newsweek and Time.

Currently, some magazines carry, as a regular feature, a column written by an expert in some area of child development or education for parenting. Some of these are Benjamin Spock, MD and T. Berry Brazelton, MD in Redbook, Theodore I. Rubin MD in Ladies' Home Journal, and Lee Salk, MD in McCall's.

The presentation of plays dealing with family or parent-child themes is limited but recognized as a useful educational method (Brim, 1968). Usually when a play is presented a group discussion follows. The American Theater Wing Community Plays, in its repetoire, has plays dealing with family problems. The Division of Mental Hygiene of the state of Ohio maintains several traveling repertory companies available to organizations in the state. The organization provides an audience and a discussion leader who utilizes material from the play in a discussion on parent education following presentation of the play.

Since the 1950s films have also been used as a point

of departure for discussions related to education for parenthood. Films and filmstrips are being used increasingly by pre-schools, schools, religious organizations and other groups which reach parents as tools to aid in education. Examples of organizations producing film are the University of Oklahoma, McGraw-Hill Text Films, the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Time-Life Films, Inc., Polymorph Films, Parents' Magazine Films. Filmstrips with accompanying records or cassettes are also produced by many of the same organizations. Films and filmstrips are available by purchase, from the film collections of some state departments of education, and through local health centers, mental health centers, university audio-visual divisions and public libraries.

Lectures as a method of parent education have been used for a long time and they play an important role in many parent education programs. The usual pattern is for an organization such as a school or local parent-teacher association to ask a speaker to present material in the area of parent education. Most often the lecturer is obtained from one of the many organizations involved in parent education. University extension services, local mental health associations, and local social work agencies will provide speakers to groups interested in this subject.

The Institute of Child Welfare, University of Minnesota, and the Department of Extension Teaching at Cornell University produce tape recordings of lectures running from fifteen to thirty minutes in length on a variety of topics (Brim, 1968). These topics are available to organizations with parent education programs to provide the basis for subsequent group discussions.

In the personal appearance lecture a "question and answer period" may follow giving parents in the audience an opportunity for clarification of information. In either the personal appearance lecture or a taped lecture with a group leader available, group discussion may ensue as a natural outgrowth of the material previously presented.

Radio has had only a minor impact as a mass media method in parent education. Gruenberg (1954) noted that the few programs established lasted for only a short length of time. Occasionally the current radio "talk shows" which encourage listeners to call in and talk to a guest have in studio visitors who are knowledgeable in the areas of child development or parent education.

Commercial television having entertainment as its aim, does screen several shows with family life as the theme. "The Waltons" and "The Little House on the Prairie" are two current examples. Local parent-teacher associations encourage families to watch such shows to-

gether and discuss their themes with members of their own family. One might question the usefulness of these models for large segments of our population.

Non-commercial parent education programs are presented on both commercial and publicly owned television stations. The Public Broadcasting System has two local stations endeavoring to produce programs of educational value for children of all ages as well as for parents. Major universities such as the University of Minnesota, the University of Colorado and the local University of Southern California televise courses in child development. Parents may enroll in the course by correspondence for university credit. Four of the television stations in the Los Angeles area present educational programs in the early morning hours. Three of these stations are local affiliates of national networks and included in the series of courses presented are programs on education, psychology and other subjects related to parent education. Due to the early hours that these programs are aired it is doubtful that they are viewed by large numbers of parents.

2) Counseling

Individual counseling ranks second to mass media in relation to the number of parents it reaches. Counseling is limited in goal, scope and depth in contrast to therapy. "Where therapeutic techniques are directed to

unconscious motives, expectations and attitudes, educative techniques are directed to, the conscious and near conscious aspects of individual personality." (Brim, 1968). A person or family wishing to be counseled comes voluntarily or in connection with other routine service. The number of sessions is usually limited by the counselor and is determined by the situation or circumstances under which the clients agreed to attend. The counselor also has to decide whether or not the individual or family will be able to respond to the educational sessions before counseling begins.

Counseling is offered to parents as a service by educational, religious and social welfare organizations as a service in its own right. Clergymen are in a strategic position to counsel as are teachers, school directors, other school personnel, public health nurses, doctors, as well as professional counselors and social workers. Counseling is regularly associated with the practice of a number of professions and in a number of settings. In health services pediatric counseling takes place in clinics and in the offices of private physicians. Parents' contacts with schools regarding their youngsters progress may sometimes fall within the realm of counseling. The Child Study Association of America and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers offer short-term counseling programs as do many local health

centers as a service to families in difficulty. In many cases educational counseling can aid a family by assisting in mobilizing the resources of the individuals involved in solving some problems. It is, however, limited in goal, scope and depth in contrast to more long-term therapeutic techniques.

3) Group Discussion Procedures

Group discussion procedures as used in parent education must be distinguished from two other modes of group participation.

Group therapy was developed out of psychotherapy as a medical treatment intended to relieve suffering. (Yalom, 1970). During World War II, the growth of therapy in groups was accelerated because of the small number of trained psychiatric workers available. Members of such groups attend because they believe the leader can assist in their ability to cope and yet they find other members in such a group are of therapeutic help too. (Yalom, 1970).

Training in "group dynamics" seeks to improve people's competence in working with others by focusing on their behavior in groups. By making people conscious of the role they are playing, and of the motives they have, change can take place.

Auerbach (1954) summarizes the distinction between group dynamics and parent group discussion procedures

thus: "...We are focusing specifically on the experience of parents meeting under skilled professional leadership in small discussion groups...The attention of the members is not focused directly on the group process or the roles they play in it. While there is reason to believe that if they learn to function more effectively in a group, they may function more affectively in other human relations; their primary purpose in coming is to become better parents, not better group members." (Auerbach, 1954).

The group discussion procedures can be classified according to their structure and their process. The structure of any given group is determined by the composition of its members. One or both parents in a family may be involved in such a group and the group might have parents of children of similar ages or of different ages. The children might be present (Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto, 1956) or not (Bettelheim, 1962). The group might be composed of parents of children with handicaps (Bennett, 1972). Group discussions can be for single parents of either sex, or for foster parents. The structure of such a group also includes the number of members and the number and length of its meetings.

Included in the process of a group meeting for discussion of areas in parent education is how the

content of such discussions is introduced. The interests and concerns of parents as they share their personal knowledge and experiences with their own children can serve as content with the leaders helping the group look at different aspects of the topics under discussion (Slavson, 1958). Content can also be introduced through mass media (lecture, film, plays), study outlines and readings, through observation by the members of their own children (cooperative nursery schools, child-observation classes) or through role playing of parent-child episodes.

The quality and training of leaders and the leadership techniques used also influence the process of a parent discussion group. There are leaders with professional backgrounds (clinical psychologists, social workers, child development workers, parent educators), leaders with no professional background who are trained by various organizations to lead such groups under their supervision such as the individuals trained by the St. Louis Mental Health Association (Brim, 1968). Some leaders have professional background and receive training in content and leadership skills such as some of those in the Child Study Association of America and, more locally, the Thalians Community Mental Health Center in Los Angeles.

The leader of such a group aids in determining the

type of interaction between members and is responsible for the participation by group members. The role of the leader may be to keep the group "task oriented" or to let the discussion run freely according to the members' interests. Such a leader might only exert his or her role in such matters as trying to equalize participation of the members or to act as an expert -- a resource for the group in giving data from reputable sources. In some groups two leaders work together; one attends to the emotional or expressive concerns of the participants while the other attends to keeping the discussion task-oriented.

Summary

Within the different types of parent education, there do therefore, exist several different methods: mass media, counseling, group discussion procedures. Because of the fact that parent education is practiced by different individuals in a helping role, there must also be variations in style within each method (their personal interpretation of their role).

Chapter 3: MOTHER-TODDLER GROUPS: A NEW FORM OF EARLY PARENT EDUCATION

We live in a varied and changing world. Experts have written and told of many ways parents should be raising their children. We were raised one way; neighbors did things differently. Parents and friends are ever willing to advise and suggest. We now accept that parenting is not something that comes naturally or instinctively; it is made up of ways and means which must be learned. How and where do young people learn to parent?

We usually learn how to perform in a new role by education, by example and by experience. However, in modern urban society there is very little opportunity to learn parenting in traditional ways. Because our country has its roots in so many different cultures and societies there is no traditional model for modern parents to follow. Densely populated areas bring increased contact between members of different ethnic backgrounds and social classes whose cultures have contrasting traditions of child rearing. Young couples in the industrial world no longer live in stable communities in close contact with their own parents. Young mothers are therefore not in close touch with their own mothers or other older female relatives who can advise or counsel them in the role of parenting. Living apart from ones extended family also denies young men and women the opportunity of have experience with infants and young children. It also pre-

cludes the opportunity to experience the support system that can exist in intergenerational family relations. As yet, our modern society has not replaced the support systems that once nourished learning about family life.

Today we are beginning to see some courses in high schools and colleges which try to educate and inform young people about parenting, but as a whole there is poor educational preparation for child rearing.

The expansion of mass media has brought a plethora of information which has several advantages. New knowledge has helped parents keep themselves and their children healthier. Better means of contraception aid parents in controlling the number and spacing of children in a family. More education is considered an advantage in our society. A person knowledgeable or informed in any area is respected and considered more eminent. The accumulation of information involved in the field of education for child rearing is vast. With this body of knowledge parent educators attempt to aid parents in the task of raising their children.

The objectives of child rearing may change over a period of time as parents and others working with children gain new conceptions of the most desirable child and adult for the society. Practices and advice have to change to reflect those new aims. Advice changes, too, as new knowledge is discovered. As with any field new

understandings come to light from time to time replacing old views. These too must remain subject to change, and so advances in the field take place. Any advice given should represent the best knowledge of any given time.

Recent social change has seen alteration in the status of women toward increased autonomy in roles within the family and in positions outside the home. Where formerly young girls were brought up to believe their only acceptable role choice in life was wife and mother they are now exposed to other options. The choices now include living alone, having careers, co-habitation with or without children and role variation within traditional marriage.

For those women who do choose motherhood the task of child rearing still must be performed. During the mothering process a woman is pulled between some ideal notion of what a "good mother" should be and her own emotions. She must learn to meet the needs of someone who is dependent on her and at the same time deal with her own desires for self-gratification.

Many parents feel some anxiety about their parental functioning. There often exists, as part of this, a sense of guilt due to the overly high expectations parents have of themselves about performing adequately in this role. Apart from family and social contact with peers the primipara feels isolated and overwhelmed by this new exper-

ience

As her children grow, the American middle-class mother turns to the usual sources for advice and counsel --the specialists. Pediatricians, psychologists and educators who have written advice for young parents expound in only the broadest terms because of the vastness of their audience. The baby's personal pediatrician can take care of medical needs, but what about advice on bottle feeding versus breast feeding, how much to let the baby cry, and the best time to commence toilet training. Pediatricians are not trained to handle non-medical problems such as these and their answers to questions on child development (if there is time to give them) are at best educated guesses. If not through experience with young children, her own memories of being mothered, or close contact with someone who is experienced, where can a mother get answers to her questions and relief from her worries?

A closeness among women fostered by the new liberation movement is beginning to replace the competition between them. In some settings women are beginning to commit themselves in helping and supportive roles with new respect to each other. Groups of young mothers are able to meet and within the bonds of friendship help each other in the role of motherhood.

One vehicle which enccurages the positive aspects of

this bonding between the mothers of young children and at the same time acts as a means of parent education is the Mother-Toddler Group.

A Mother-Toddler Group program wherein mothers and their children meet with an individual knowledgeable and experienced in the field of Early Childhood, once or twice a week for two hours, can be one way of giving parents and children the means of being together to observe and learn from one another.

Parent group education has been used for many years in a variety of settings. At the onset of their child walking parents are confronted by a whole new set of behaviors. Toddlers in trying out their new skill expand their world --simply with their new mobility. Their escapades are delightful and difficult almost at the same time. Parents are constantly baffled by the meaning of what their young child is doing or saying as he discovers language. Regular contact with someone who is a professional in the field of Early Childhood can be helpful in interpreting what is happening as children interact in a play setting. Also, parents observing their child at play with others can sometimes use the assurance that what is taking place is part of natural growth and development. In an atmosphere where parenting is respected there is the opportunity to share the concerns, experiences and joys of motherhood. The group experience can offer mothers the means of ac-

quiring knowledge and skills of child rearing through modeling, counseling and discussion. It can also help mothers gain a positive view of themselves and their children

To summarize, all the above mentioned reasons for supporting early parent education can be grouped into three main thrusts. Mother-Toddler Groups are logical settings for education, example, and experience with young children and their parents.

First, A Mother-Toddler Group is a setting which offers a leader who is schooled and experienced in all aspects of parenting young children. Such a person can advise and counsel parents and pass on new knowledge from the field of child development. Contact with a person who can interpret for a parent what is happening specifically between herself and her child can be useful. Meeting with a group provides a place to work out ones own personal needs with other parents under the guidance of someone knowledgeable in personal and group dynamics.

Second, viewing different examples of parenting within a group offers parents alternatives for consideration in their own mode of child rearing. Within a group discussion reasons for determining one's own style of parenting can be examined and cooperative support of viable methods of child rearing can be verified. A teacher working directly with toddlers can model alternative ways of

handling different situations. So that various ways of working with children this age are exemplified by the teacher and by other parents.

Third, shared experience with other mothers who have children the same age gives an opportunity for a mother to view her child along with others moving through the same stage of development. This experience can also give mothers the assurance that children do not necessarily flow through childhood smoothly, that from time to time mothers have different concerns about their ability to parent. Also, participating in a group gives the opportunity to share varying points of view and experiences about child rearing difficulties and this can be useful in problem solving related to one's own child. A close group of mothers can act as a unique type of support system for young people who have found themselves involved in an undertaking of great responsibility and importance--parenting.

My peronal aim as a teacher of Mother-Toddler Groups is to provide a comfortable setting wherein parents can equally air their interests and concerns and find, through discussion with other parents, their own unique repertoire of child rearing skills.

Chapter 4: AN ILLUSTRATIVE PROGRAM

Inception

Early in 1974 a member of the Sisterhood of Temple Adat Ari El noted that although the Temple has a nursery school, a religious school, and a Hebrew school there was no program for young parents or their very young children. This member had a daughter and a very young granddaughter who had little contact with other young mothers or children. The Temple tries to provide programs and activities which will encourage the participation of all its members. It is especially interested in offering activities for young families who will then establish an affiliation with the Jewish community. Responding to this grandmother's suggestion for a Mother-Toddler Program, Dr. Emil Jacoby, Educational Director and Mrs. Minna Halbert, Director of the Nursery School at Adat Ari El began to interview people in a search for someone who could establish and teach a Mother-Toddler Class. Dr. Rose Bromwich, Professor of Education at California State University at Northridge, was contacted and she in turn contacted me, one of her students in the Masters' Program specializing in Early Childhood in the Department of Educational Psychology.

Teacher

I had previously taught nursery school at Adat Ari El and was known to both Dr. Jacoby and Mrs. Halbert. With the additional training in individual psychodynamics and marital and family dynamics I had received in the PIPS

program at the Thalians Community Mental Health Center and the education and training I received during my studies at the California State University at Northridge I felt I was ready to establish a Mother-Toddler Program. I wrote a proposal for the establishment of a Mother-Toddler Program at Adat Ari El (see appendix a) and applied for the position of teacher. The proposal and application were accepted.

Assistant Teacher

Soni Fields, a woman known to me for many years, was hired as an assistant. In a short while she was trained to assist in working with mothers and very young children. She has a background in education and a great deal of experience working as a volunteer in pre-schools and in the Los Angeles City Schools. She is particularly skilled and resourceful when handling young children. During play when a situation arises that requires adult intervention she and I move in as a team--one toward the children, one toward the mothers. Through this approach we model and interpret for the mothers in our program, ways to help children develop socially. Soni's energy and devotion add a great deal to the success of the Toddler Program at Adat Ari El. Her assistance is invaluable during the discussion portion of our class. After the mothers have developed trust in us as the class leaders they are able to relax with me during discussion time while Soni attends to the children. Her caring attitude toward the birds and

rabbits which are available to us has elicited gentle and considerate responses in the toddlers. I am grateful for her participation.

Community

Adat Ari El is located in North Hollywood, California. The congregation is made up of white, middle-class and upper-middle-class families, most of whom are college educated and who work in various professions and white collar positions. There are a number of families in the congregation who are subsidized by the Temple. The various educational programs held at the Temple (nursery school, religious school, Hebrew school, adult education programs) have tuition which is determined by staff and equipment needs since Adat Ari El functions as a non-profit organization. It was decided to charge a fee of $15 per month for each mother and child to cover salaries (mine and an assistant's) and supplies. The class was scheduled to meet one morning each week for two hours. We chose 10 a.m. to 12 noon giving mothers time to get themselves ready in the early part of the morning and to coincide our closing with dismissal time from the nursery school in case any of the mothers had children to pick up and take home.

The Temple sent out flyers to members of the congregation inviting inquiries about the new Mother-Toddler Program (appendix b). Of the twenty inquiries, eight mothers were interested enough to sign up for the class.

Interestingly enough only one was a Temple member. The others were informed of the Mother-Toddler Class by parents, parents-in-law or friends who were Temple members. Soon after the first class was established, many new inquiries were made about the Program. By the third meeting two new members had been added to the class plus one mother who had been promised a position as a personal favor. One month after the establishment of our first Class a second Mother-Toddler Class was opened at Adat Ari El for a second group of ten mothers.

Environment

Recognizing the importance of the environment and the needs of parents and very young children the setting at Adat Ari El was organized maximizing safety, cleanliness and appropriate stimulation. A classroom previously set aside for a kindergarten class was selected to house the Mother-Toddler Program since it was apart from the nursery school and it had its own adjacent, fenced-in play yard. Extra nursery school tables and chairs were made available and special toys and equipment for children aged one to three were obtained.

The classroom which houses the Mother-Toddler Program at Adat Ari El is bright and cheerful. Since the room is used at other times as a nursery classroom and a religious school classroom the artwork of older children often decorates the walls. As the toddlers paint at the easel, their paintings too adorn the walls as they dry before

eagerly being taken home. Freshly made play-dough is available at every session for play and tasting. Toddlers enjoy coloring paper and cartons with felt-tipped pens or painting with sponges or gadgets. Yarn, styrofoam packing material and large cut-outs can be glued by young children all with a minimal amount of supervision from adults. Puzzles with up to five pieces each with its own slot can be played with by toddlers. Small cardboard books with large pictures or textures to investigate are enjoyed. Metal boards with large magnetic pieces can be manipulated freely. Large wooden beads are easily strung on long pipe cleaners or plastic string. The doll corner with its stove, cupboards, dishes, pots, pans, telephones and empty food containers provide a great interest to toddlers. Large cardboard blocks (12" x 6" x 4") are used for building and wooden trucks and cars roll through and around. Pull-toys, buggies, and dolls are used by both boys and girls of this age. Tinkertoys and other construction toys that are easy to put together for toddlers amuse and excite young hands. Commercial toys which operate and entertain by pushing, pulling, sliding or winding are available to exercise muscles and coordination. Small wheel toys on trays sprinkled with cornmeal provide small hands with the opportunity to make tracks and patterns. In one corner there is a large shag rug which has pillows, a large cube for climbing and a variety of

stuffed animals for play. The rug is also used for changing diapers and sitting around for singing. Some mothers and toddlers enjoy sitting there together to read. At the rear of the room there is a sink made accessible to the children by a large wooden box. The children also enjoy looking out the windows which span the front side of the classroom. Nursery school children can be seen and on rainy days the toddlers watch the raindrops or the people running past. A third wall houses storage cupboards and fourth wall is filled with a chalk board with colored chalk available for use. Wherever we find our equipment is out of reach for the toddlers (easel, sink, windows, etc.) we have large, flat wooden blocks on which the children can stand. Mothers and teachers are especially watchful whenever the children climb. Adjacent to the rear of the room is a vacant classroom. During the Mother-Toddler Class coffee is made here and at the request of the mothers there is a potty chair which some of the children have begun to use.

Outdoors there is a cement area for tricycles, pull-toys, push-toys and toys that can be sat upon and rolled by pushing. There is a portable sand box filled with cornmeal along with shovels, buckets, dishes and bowls which can be moved inside on cold or rainy days. A low wooden slide with three steps which can also be moved inside if necessary is located on the grass area. On warm days toddlers enjoy washing dolls and dishes in large

bowls outside on the child-sized picnic table. They also like to wash windows or paint the walls of the building with water. There is a dirt pit for digging and a large sidewalk area which is used for circle games and dancing.

In all, the environment is spacious, clean and inviting to young children and their mothers. The toddlers are free to move to any of the activities available and to participate in any way they wish, if they desire. The arrangement of toys and materials remains essentially the same each week so that it will present a familiar environment to the children. Since this type of class focuses on social interaction and personal relationships it is important that the environment is interesting, stimulating, stable and safe. It is utilized as an integral part of our program.

Membership in Group

Although the program at Adat Ari El is titled "Mother Toddler" this does not preclude the involvement of a father in our class. From time to time the situation in a family may change; whoever is taking a major role in caring for a toddler is welcome to attend our sessions. Two mothers attend school in the morning. One child's father is a regular participant with his son. The other family utilizes grandparents when the mother's schedule precludes her attendance. Some parents have taken vacations and two younger siblings have been born since our class began in October. Both babysitters and grandparents (grand-

mothers and grandfathers) have attended with toddlers. The toddler is the stable member and is brought by whoever is taking primary care of him. Our program assumed the name Mother-Toddler Class since in this community mothers take the primary role in caring for the young children in a family.

Our class is limited to ten mother-child dyads although exceptions are sometimes made. Due to illness, vacations and other commitments, our average attendance in twenty-four sessions is seven pairs per week. Toddlers are classified as children who can walk and there is no lower age limit. The toddlers have been remaining in the program until the parents feel they are ready for a regular nursery school setting. It is an on-going class which meets for two hours each week. Parts of some discussions have been involved with readiness for pre-school and the appropriate setting for each child. Since this class began in October, five children left the class to enter preschool. The places that were vacated in our program have been filled by our waiting list. Goller (1955) found that an ideal group size was 8 to 22. The average session in the program at Adat Ari El is fourteen individuals which makes a comfortable group for two leaders and the available environment.

Typical Session

The first hour of each session is focused on the children and their interaction with the teachers, the mothers,

and with their use of the environment. Soni and I greet the parents and children as they arrive. At first the mothers followed their children closely and sat near them as they played. We encouraged this because we felt the children needed to know that their mothers were going to be present at all times. Also the mothers needed to see that the environment was safe and comfortable both physcially, emotionally and socially. We encourage the children to be free to use the supplies and equipment and mess as they will. The only rule we have maintained is that the children use the equipment safely without harm to themselves or others. At first the mothers asked for limits such as whether we minded if the paint brushes were mixed up or if the children could use more than one piece of paper. Since we believe that the Mother-Toddler Class should be a place for free exploration we urged the mothers to relax their standards of cleanliness (paint on the children's clothing, playing on the floor) and decorum (i.e. taking turns on the slide, giving up a desired toy to someone else) and simply enjoy being with their children. We have a song time on the rug and a game time outside ("Ring Around the Rosie," etc.). The mothers and toddlers are invited to join in but there is no rule that anyone must participate. Indeed, we explain that watching may be a child's way of participating. During this first hour I request the mothers to allow the children to make the choice as to how and how much they

wish to participate.

Midway through the morning we have snack time. The mothers agreed to take turns bringing snacks which have been healthy and of great variety. The children have had the opportunity to try new foods in a relaxed atmosphere. During Jewish holidays, mothers have brought in some traditional foods which add to the genial atmosphere around snack time and birthdays have been a special sharing time for the whole group.

Following the children's snack time I invite the mothers to take a cup of coffee or tea. This has become the signal for the mothers to choose if they wish to participate in a discussion. It involves determining if their child is able to play independently under Soni's supervision or if Soni is able to engage them in some activity she has readied (story, more games outside, etc.). At this point the child determines the amount of separation he or she can tolerate comfortably. Our discussions are held in the same classroom with the outside door open (weather permitting). Soni situates herself outside if there are children who choose to move outdoors. It is the responsibility of myself and the mothers in the room to watch over the children who remain indoors. The mothers are told to make themselves available to their children if they feel the need. Some parents have chosen to be outside with their child for a while and then join in the

discussion when they feel their child is comfortable.

Handling of Separation

There is no stigma attached to any child or mother who feels the need to be near the other. Many of the children who are over two years of age play independently with merely a glance from an adult's watchful eye from time to time. Younger children need closer supervision or to sit with their mothers at the table and play. If at any time a mother feels an urgent need to utilize the group discussion both teachers and mothers have attempted to engage her child so she can use the group's resources. At no time do we allow a mother to leave the site without at least telling her child and at best dealing with the separation or taking the child with her. This does come up occasionally when a mother needs to use the bathroom or to get something from her car. We take this kind of opportunity to help both parents and children in dealing with separation. Philosophically I believe that in general children of this age are not yet mature enough to deal with lengthy separation from their mothers.

Chapter 5: PARENT INFORMATION SURVEYS

When I began teaching Mother-Toddler Groups I had certain feelings supported by learning and by my own experiences. These assumptions centered around how worried and concerned young parents are especially about their first child. I also felt that there were too few sources for parents to get information or other help to relieve their anxiety. To substantiate my beliefs and at the same time to gather information about how the parents felt about the usefulness of the Mother-Toddler Class I was teaching, I gathered information from them. To utilize some of the material as an informal method of evaluation, I asked the mothers to respond anonymously.

I have been teaching three Mother-Toddler Classes since September, 1974. Two classes are held at Adat Ari El and one at the Farm School in Woodland Hills, a community with young parents very much like those described from North Hollywood. Although the groups are limited to ten parents each, some parents have left the groups because of changes in plans or because they felt their children were ready for pre-school. Also some parents did not fill out the surveys. There are, therefore, different numbers of responses to each survey. All three classes are conducted as described earlier.

At the first session attended by a mother and her child I presented Information Survey #1. (See page 72.)

MOTHER-TODDLER CLASS

INFORMATION SURVEY #1

1. All parents of toddlers have some worries. What do you worry about most with your child?

2. What do you see as the main difficulties in being the mother of young children today?

3. How do you anticipate a Mother-Toddler Class being of value to you?

4. How could the teacher of a Mother-Toddler Class help you best?

In all forty-two parents responded.

In response to the first question, many mothers expressed worries about their child's health and safety:

> "...I worry a great deal when they're not in my sight--that they're being physically watched and protected as I would protect them..."
>
> "If I'm bringing him up without causing any neurosis or irrevocable problems."
>
> "His health and motor development."
>
> "She'll be killed or seriously injured (she climbs everything--top of ladders, etc.)"
>
> "He lets other children push him around."

They also stated concerns over their child's dependency, aggression and eating and sleeping problems. Some wrote of their difficulty in leaving their children as evidenced by the following:

> "Separation anxiety has set in. She cries for at least two hours after my departure. I am afraid that a strange sitter may become impatient with her."

Most mothers wrote about the emotional needs of their children:

> "I worry that I will do something to her little psyche that will turn her into a nerd, who will never be her own person or know who she is."
>
> "That she will be exposed to all the beautiful things there are at any early age and be able to appreciate as many as possible and grow to greatest potential as an individual while appreciating others and respecting them--but having strengths to be herself."

Many parents had something to say about their hopes for their children:

"Hoping that with our help, he will grow up to be a good person."

"That the child will enjoy childhood--have creative and social experience without the pressures and competition of today's society."

Other worries mentioned were: illness, discipline, being consistent, and babysitters.

The second item on the Information Survey asked about the main difficulties in being the mother of young children. There were four main areas that were mentioned more than others as being most difficult:

1. The adjustment to motherhood and its responsibilities:

"Being closed in with a toddler, I question if I'm still growing as a person in order to stay abreast with my husband."

"For me, it was the adjustment to motherhood and the constant demand and unending responsibility."

"I do not wish to have someone else raise my child; yet I often feel frustrated in having to postpone career plans."

"The general autonomy of American family life. This would be a lot easier if we lived in a tribal society."

2. The conflict of wanting to fulfill the child's needs and personal needs:

"I feel torn between motherhood and a career as my main source of personal satisfaction."

"I find it not as stimulating as I thought. Spending so much time at home is very boring."

"I'm torn between being a good mother and doing things for myself."

3. The pressures imposed from outside the family:

"Years ago if you chose to be a mother that is what you devoted your time to--now we are constantly being told that raising children should be combined with other interests. We are made to feel almost guilty if we want to spend our time only with children."

"Raising my children to embrace traditional ethics and morals in a world that does not seem to value them and where my family teachings are contradicted often by outside influences."

"I feel the pressures from myself and my peers to be the 'perfect mother.'"

4. The uncertainty of knowledge and understanding in times of fast change:

"Trying to break away from old beliefs; keeping up with complex times."

"Another difficulty in being a young mother is in knowing just how to shape my child into a nice, well-rounded self-confident individual."

"So much is written and said on how to respond to certain circumstances."

The third question investigated how a Mother-Toddler Class might be of value to young parents. Most mothers felt it would be a source of social contact for themselves and their children.

"It gives the child a chance to socialize with other children in a nursery school setting and Mommy can get out and interact with other mothers."

"By providing an opportunity for my child to play and be around other children and adults. It also lets her engage in activities I would not allow her to do at home--painting!"

Some mothers felt it could be an opportunity to learn and be with other adults.

"...observing my child with other toddlers, in many different situations."

"Be with children his own age and learn to talk. Help him grow and trust others besides mother."

"With first child she needs otherchildren around and I need support and help from experienced mothers."

"Hopefully it will be a chance to air our feelings, exchange ideas and expel frustrations by learning how others deal with similar problems."

Other anticipated values in a Mother-Toddler Class were: an opportunity to be out and a special time to spend with one's child.

The last question on the first Information Survey asked how the teacher of a Mother-Toddler Class might be helpful to parents. The four main ways that mothers anticipated the teacher's role were as follows:

1. As a resource person

"By sharing some of her own experiences and ideas with us concerning children of this age."

"She could help me to understand the toddler."

"Someone to help me with my questions and problems."

2. As a teacher for the children

"By introducing songs, books, creative activities and helping me out with child rearing problems."

"By being some sort of authority figure to the children besides Mommy and Daddy."

3. As an experienced expert

"Making me more aware of problems of other mothers."

"Perhaps by answering some of the million 'trivial' questions we have every day."

"Make suggestions to mother-child relations. Point out abilities or inadequacies of the child."

4. As a discussion leader

"By guiding our group...to things they wouldn't otherwise do without this group, and similarly exposing parents to ideas and thoughts and child rearing concepts we may not be familiar with."

"By opening discussions on a variety of questions mothers may have."

"Have parents share their ideas."

"I would like to be led in discussions concerning Mother-toddler problems."

After approximately six meetings, a Mother-Toddler Class jells into a group. Parents and children are all quite familiar to one another evidenced by the fact that they inquire about members of the class who are not in attendance and usually being able to account for absences. Discussions are usually more relaxed and the mothers begin to share more intimate material about themselves and their families.

It is at this point, when I felt the group was going well, that I asked the mothers to respond to Information Survey #2. The questions were aimed at seeking information about personal change as a result of attending the Mother-Toddler Class. I also sought information as to the sources of change. Twenty-eight mothers responded to Information Survey #2. (See page 78).

In response to the change question, most mothers responses fell into three areas:

1. Mothers felt less anxious

"I think I've become less anxious about some of the 2 year old problems that have arisen. I'm able to better tolerate situations that come up. I've tried to

MOTHER-TODDLER CLASS

INFORMATION SURVEY #2

1. Do you feel you have changed in any way since we started our class? Please explain.

2. What specific subject areas in our discussions were of most h p to you in alleviating worries or concerns?

3. Are there any subjects connected with child-rearing that you would like brought up for discussion?

4. Have the other mothers in the class been of help to you? How?

5. Have the teachers of the class been of help to you? How?

becomes more open minded about potty training and willing to try different things at home to make our home happier."

"Not as uptight."

"I'm more relaxed."

"I feel I am a little more relaxed."

2. Mothers felt more confident

"Yes. I have more confidence and am at ease with being the mother of a small child."

"I feel I am much more patient and reasonable in my approach to discipline for my understanding of my need to be so is increased."

"I feel I have a more realistic perspective of my child."

3. Children's behavior was more acceptable

"I have taken more of an interest in his play things and ways of play."

"I think I have become more aware of my child. I have also developed more patience and I realize I'm not the only one going through these things."

The second question asked for the specific areas of discussion that were found to be most helpful in alleviating concern. These are listed in order beginning with the subjects most frequently mentioned:

toilet training
discipline
tantrums
eating habits
fears
sleep disturbances
sharing
hardships of parenting
emotional needs
separation
anger
development

The purpose of the third question was to discover what

areas of discussion the mothers wished to pursue further. They are listed in order of most to least frequently mentioned ones:

sleeping habits
toilet training
eating habits
father's role
fears
discipline
new baby in the family
getting children to cooperate

The helpfulness of being in a group with other mothers was the target for data on the fourth question. The mothers' responses were generally enthusiastic:

"It's very helpful to be able to share problems. I have also made some nice friends for myself..."

"Yes, I feel learning that we all have basically the same worries and child problems at home helps relieve our anxiety."

"I found out I am not as neurotic as I thought I was."

"I've never felt so comfortable with a group of women. At times, the adage 'misery loves company' was most applicable."

"I've learned through observation how many things can be handled with a child, and sometimes, how they ought not to be handled."

Through the responses to the last question on the second Information Survey I feel the teacher's role was defined. The mothers commented on the teacher as a resource person, as a model, and as a discussion leader.

"She is always there to listen and give calm answers when everything seems so urgent."

"I think the teachers have both helped make me and _____feel comfortable in the class and get all the children involved. There is a relaxed atmosphere and a non-critical attitude where each child and mother is

accepted for herself."

"The teacher has a good insight into the problems of children this age and I find her advice and opinions very helpful."

"She established a very relaxed atmosphere which allowed the whole experience for both mothers and children to be a very positive one."

"By listening to them I've been reassured and feel generally relaxed about my children, both in their progress and development as children and as individuals with unique personalities."

The last Information Survey was responded to after parents had attended fifteen or more sessions of the Mother-Toddler Class. In all there were twenty-seven responses to Information Survey #3. (See page 82).

The first question of Information Survey #3 asked the mothers to report any new worries or concerns they were experiencing. Few mothers mentioned problems. The problems mentioned fell into three areas:

1. a change in family situation

"The effect our moving will have--leaving her securities, street, home and friends."

"New baby in September--now he is the ONLY child."

2. new stage in development

"Trying to teach him to verbalize problems and complaints and toilet training."

"My child's attention span is so short. I'm waiting for him to start talking."

3. aggressive behavior

"When he can't stand a situation he will bite. My biggest concern is his aggression and how I should discipline."

MOTHER-TODDLER CLASS

INFORMATION SURVEY #3

1. Do you have any new concerns or worries about your child since you started this class? Please explain.

2. In what new ways are you handling your child's behavior?

3. Do you see any of the mothers from our group outside class time? Do you see them with or without your children?

4. Is there any new way the teacher of this class can be of help to you?

5. Would you recommend this type of class to anyone? Please explain why.

"His sometimes aggressive behavior towards the younger children. Though he's bigger than many of them he's of the oldest and often the aggressor."

A second question asked mothers what new ways they had found to handle their children. The responses fell into five general categories:

1. trying to be more patient

"I am much calmer. I find myself trying to emulate the teacher's manner of speaking to all the children."

"I'm trying to be patient."

2. trying to understand the child's perspective

"I try to be more patient and try to see things thru a child's perspective."

"I find I try to understand what is taking place with my daughter and then deal with the situation accordingly."

"Trying to listen to him more and work from there."

3. trying to communicate in a clearer manner

"Being more explicit (showing) in telling child behavior I expect."

"More verbal explaining of how I'm being effected by her behavior--positive and negative."

4. trying to be more consistent

"I am handling his behavior by trying to be consistent."

"Giving warning then following through."

5. trying to be more positive

"I have been concentrating on reinforcing positive behavior."

"I'm trying to use a lot of positive reinforcement. Example: when I see him sharing toys, playing nicely I praise him rather than waiting for just aggressive acts to reprimand."

The third question sought information on how helpful the Mother-Toddler Class had been in forming social relationships between the participants outside class time.

Of the twenty-seven mothers who responded, fourteen see each other with their children during the week between classes. In addition, eight mothers reported meeting with other class members and their husbands socially in the evening.

Another question asked for new ways the teachers could be of help to the group. Most mothers asked for continuation of the same program and discussions. The mothers who had expressed new worries asked for discussion in the area which were of concern to them.

The last question asked whether the mothers would recommend this type of class. The overwhelming (and most gratifying response to this query was positive:

> "I am attending this class with my daughter who is my third child. I am sorry I wasn't able to benefit from a class like this with my two other daughters. I've found it very helpful in understanding my child's behavior and just being with her to observe what she does."
>
> "Only a mother who is too insecure to accept advice and suggestions from both the teachers and other mothers would not benefit from a class like this."
>
> "To everyone! Beneficial for parents to learn about toddlers in general and their child in particular, reassuring to compare and observe, discuss similar problems, different solutions, etc. Just as important it's marvelous for the children, they meet others their age and it eases their way into a regular school environment."
>
> "Absolutely! It's a great beginning for 'socializing' for the child--and the discussions and support from the mothers talk is extremely helpful and calming."
>
> "Yes, very much so. I think it's a terrific education for both mother and child. I have been able to observe _____in a group situation and he's been comfortable

with it since I don't leave him."

Chapter 6: PHENOMENA UNIQUE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MOTHER-TODDLER GROUP

Group discussion as a method of parent education has been utilized in this country since prior to 1820 (see Review of the Literature). With the availability of more information about groups and techniques for conducting them, this manner of educating parents has grown in its effectiveness and popularity. Working with parents and toddlers in groups is a relatively new type of group. This is evidenced in part by the lack of literature available on the subject. Although there are phenomena common to all groups I have found certain aspects of a Mother-Toddler Group unique. Key phenomena are the issue of separation, styles of participation, nature and development of interaction, sources of curriculum and the role of the leader.

The Issue of Separation

Within the toddler there exists two contradictory urges. One, the urge to be on his own controlling his world, the other his increased awareness of his need for his parents. He cannot have both at once. As he matures he gives in a little at each end of his desire to be independent and dependent at the same time. There is no internal timeclock predicting which way he is being pulled at any one time during the day. Life for his caretaker, therefore, is hectic. It would be easy for a parent to expect the child to develop independence overnight. When a child begins to walk and talk people tend to forget how immature he is despite these impressive new abilities. Mothers and

fathers are often baffled when during one part of a day their child wanders off in the park playing with some birds and then suddenly wants to be held or refuses to leave their side. Those responsible for a toddler's well-being have to strike a delicate balance. They need to anticipate dangers and keep him safe and yet give him enough freedom so that he doesn't become entirely dependent on them or too rebellious about restrictions. Successful handling of this issue determines whether a child can retain a vigorous sense of power without doubts about himself. Separation is the issue which deals with the child's drive for autonomy and for both his own and his parents ambivalence about his preparedness. As with all early development the ability for a child to separate comes gradually and with increased amounts of experience. In a Mother-Toddler Group both mother and child are present. There is however the opportunity at different times, for experience in varying amounts of separateness. Some of these are the child moving across the room to find a toy, the child going outdoors to play, the mother going to the bathroom, the mother going into an adjacent room for coffee, and the child engaging with other adults or children for his own needs or pleasures. There is also a sense of separation experienced by the child when although his mother is physically present in the room she is unavailable to him because she is engaged in conversation with other adults. This is felt because the child in his drive for

autonomy feels he not only wants control of himself but also over the people around him.

The second half of a Mother-Toddler Group is set aside for discussion between the mothers. As discussed in the Illustrative Program each session brings with it the point at which each mother and toddler must work through the amount and length of separation each is ready to handle since mothers engaged in discussion are unavailable to their children. There is a safe environment and a trustworthy caretaker available (assistant teacher). Each mother is respected for the way in which she manages the separation issue with her child. The class leaders are available for information, help, and support with any mother indicating the need. Generally, children under three years of age have a difficult time dealing with lengthy separation because of their rudimentary speech and lack of emotional maturity. However, a Mother-Toddler Class does give the opportunity for some separation and a laboratory setting for separation experiences.

Style of Participation

Although there are styles of participation in groups familiar to most social scientists there is a unique factor effecting participation for any mother in a Mother-Toddler Group.

During any Mother-Toddler Group discussion some children are in the room and it is possible that their presence acts as an inhibiting factor on a mother's participation in the group discussion. The content of discussion deals for the most part with concerns mothers have about their children. It seems as though their anxiety about their child rearing ability is raised as concerns become worries. Parents become frustrated by lack of knowledge and experience in handling difficulties and before they act on a possible solution they need to feel a clear understanding of what is taking place. Prior to being able to act clearly their dealings with their children are often muddled and ineffective. During this unclear period many are reluctant to confront their children directly or to talk about their worries in their child's presence. This is evidenced when mothers express concerns to the leader privately or mention them in the discussion group in a lowered voice.

A unique phenomena, then, to a Mother-Toddler Group discussion, is the possible suppression of some material because of the presence of the participants' children.

Nature and Development of Interaction

As with the development of any group, a class of mothers and toddlers grows to a cohesive entity through various stages. Personal observation as well as documentation in a log, a condensed version of which can be found in the appendix of this work, reveals three such

stages: an Introductory Stage, a Transitional Stage and Group Stage. These stages and characteristics interactional modes are summarized in the table which follows:

Table 1: Stages of Development in Mother-Toddler Groups and Characteristic Interactions

Stage and Approximate Duration	Mother and Leader	Mother and Child	Leader and Child	Mother with each other	Mothers with other Mother's Children	Children with each other
Introductory (1-3 sessions)	Mother seeks approval of her parenting. She seeks authority and information from leader who is seen as "all-knowing parent." Leader seeks to incorporate mother into group experience.	Mother nurtures and protects child. Child is curious about the environment. Explores within bounds of mother's protection. Checks often with mother for approval of behavior.	Leader seeks friendship in order to reassure child of safe environment. Child seems interested but reluctant to make contact without reassurance from mother.	Mothers are polite asking traditional questions about each others children (i.e age, etc.)	Mothers greet others' children and sometimes offer assistance. Children are resistant and wary.	No Interaction
	General mode: Pooling out	General Mode Mutual and exclusive	General mode: Adult invitation declined	General mode: Formal and traditionally ritualistic	General mode: Adult invitation declined	
Transitional (4-6 sessions)	Mothers more relaxed, seek more support and assurance from leader. Leader sets purpose of group and discussions as educational. Encourages cooperative participation. Deflects more attention mothers give to leader back to group.	Mother more relaxed and trusting of surroundings. She will occasionally move away from child (to get coffee, etc.) Child is relaxed and curious. Moves around room, freely with brief returns to mother for assurance.	Leader seeks closer contact with child. She initiates conversation. Child acknowledges greetings and will accept help from teacher who is seen as "assistant mother."	Friendships form and there is acceptance of differences in ways of parenting. All interact during group discussion.	Mothers greet and help other mothers' children. All are comfortable with shared care of children. Children are relaxed and accepting of help from any adult as trust is established.	Some acknowledgement of "friends." Mostly parallel play, under mothers' watchful eyes.
	General mode: Growing trust in group.	General mode: A beginning separation experience.	General mode: Adult invitation accepted	General mode: Beginnings of shared empathy in task of parenting	General mode: Adult invitation accepted.	General mode: There are other toddlers in the world.
Group (7+ sessions)	Mother sees leader as an ally and a resource. Feels more comfortable with own actions though they may be different from those of other parents. Leader seeks to prevent monopolizing of group by a few. Maintains equal participation and utilization of group by all parents. Leader keeps topics of discussion appropriate.	Mother relaxed and accepting of her child's individual style of participation. Child is comfortable and autonomous for longer periods of time. Both enjoy each other's company and that of others in group.	Leader has comfortable, open relationship with children. Able to help in learning new skills. Child greets leader independently; often seeks "private" and intimate time with leader. Accepts leader as his or her friend.	Interaction has become very informal. Intimate material is brought up during discussion. Feelings are openly expressed.	Mothers are friendly and helpful to all children. They will intervene in disputes between children. Children accept adult help and support. Respond to other mothers admonitions with support from own mother.	Greetings of friends. Some primitive cooperative play among older toddlers. More assertive behavior is observed.
	General mode: Cooperative problem solving and search	General mode: More comfortable early separation experiences	General mode: New friends.	General mode: Enjoyment, intimacy and cohesion	General mode: Supplemental mothering given and accepted.	General mode: Experimenting with interaction: Pleasure and frustration.

A mother's first contact with a Mother-Toddler Group is with the leader either by telephone or in person. During the introductory relationship the teacher is viewed as an "all-knowing parent." Young mothers seem to enter a Mother-Toddler Group looking for an authoritative expert on child rearing who will teach them how to raise their children. They ask individual questions of the leader seeking answers which they can then put into effect for instant solutions to their problems. Most of the mothers in the Groups I have led seem to have read much of the recent literature on child rearing which is characterized by a step-by-step how-to-do-it approach. Encountering an expert in the field of Child Development personally, mothers tend to seek the same kinds of answers that the books offer only more specifically aimed at their own particular situation. Hence, during the group discussion the members direct much of the conversation to the leader and pure discussion time is short -- fifteen to twenty minutes.

A new mother-toddler dyad, entering a Mother-Toddler Group maintains a mutually exclusive relationship through the Introductory Stage. Physically they remain close to each other and in general, most of the child's conversation is directed to his or her mother.

As each new dyad enters the class, the leaders attempt to initiate communication with the children. Usually it remains one-way with perfunctory acknowledgement of the teacher by the child. Most toddlers are stimulated at first by the environment and their superficial recognition of individuals is recognized as characteristic of the age and is respected.

During the Introductory Stage the relationship between mothers is a formal and traditionally ritualistic one. There is mutual attraction due to the homogeneity of the group and conversation during this stage is limited to areas covered by the universality of parenting.

Interaction between the mothers and children other than their own is almost nil. It usually involves greetings made by the mothers to the children and perhaps mothers helping a child if their own mother is not close. Usually the children respond to this type of help by calling for their own mother.

In the Introductory Stage there is no interaction between the children.

The second stage in the development of a Mother-Toddler Group is a Transitional Stage which lasts from four to

six sessions.

The interaction between the leader and mothers during this stage is beginning to be more relaxed. The mothers and leader have become more familiar to each other and are aware and more comfortable with each others' style and expectations. The leader is seen less as a teacher and more as an authority or expert who will lead the group in a problem-solving approach. During the group discussions, focus has been taken off the leader and conversation takes place among the members with a minimal amount of approval sought through occasional glances to the leader. Discussion time has grown to about half an hour.

The relationship between each mother and her child is still exclusive but much more relaxed. Both mother and child feeling more comfortable in the class setting, move away from each other for short periods of time to participate in the class as individuals.

The leader still initiates interaction with the children during this period, but the children are more relaxed. The mothers are comfortable and they overtly encourage the children to interact with the leader. Some children acknowledge the greetings of the leader and the mothers begin to encourage the children to talk and show the teacher new shoes or special clothes.

Interaction between the mothers in the Transitional Stage is relaxed and informal. Some friendships form and there is an acceptance of differences in belief and

practice as related to parenting. This growing acceptance in the group is an important factor in the development of each individual. During this period some alliances are formed in the group leading to friendships outside class time. The group discussions last up to thirty minutes and most members participate in problem solving as they begin to see concerns in the group as universal.

Mothers, at this point, initiate contact with children other than their own and the children respond comfortably. The mothers are comfortable with each other and this is evidenced by the accepting manner in which they allow their peers to interact with their children.

In the Transitional Stage of a Mother-Toddler Group one sees the children engaged for longer periods of parallel play with no adults hovering near. There is some superficial acknowledgement of other children by some of the older toddlers and some more assertive behavior is exhibited.

The Group Stage of a Mother-Toddler Group is reached after about seven sessions.

The leader is seen as a facilitator and is viewed during the discussion time as a resource person available on request. There is very little direct questioning of the leader about personal concerns of mothers as this type of material is saved for group discussion time. Occasionally some mothers do approach the leader personally because they feel their worry or concern is too private or because they

feel embarrassed or in some other way reluctant to open a subject up to the whole group. They ask the leader to do it for them. The leader is still seen as an expert but is called on to aid in cooperative problem-solving rather than for simple answers.

Each mother-child dyad is relaxed and open in the Group Stage. After entering and greeting whoever is present, most mothers expect their children to start playing independently. Many children are now able to do this. Some, because of immaturity or style require their mother's help but it is usually for a short period of time and in general most mothers and toddlers interact quite independently once re-establishment of contact with the class and its environment are made each week.

Many children begin to enter and greet the leader independently. The interaction between leader and toddlers is characterized by intimacy and reciprocity in degrees as individual as each child is individual.

The interaction between the mothers has developed into one which is informal and quite intimate. They look forward to the discussion time since the group is cohesive and productive. Group discussion lasts from forty minutes upward and I believe it is seen as the main attraction for weekly attendance. The exchange of ideas and the honest and open expression of feelings leads to a cohesiveness which in turn leads to better attendance and greater participation by the group members.

Interaction between mothers and toddlers other than their own is relaxed and reciprocal. Mothers interact quite freely with all the children and the children often sit on the closest lap or turn to the nearest mother for assistance. In all, the bonding and closeness of the mothers includes their children.

By the seventh session, many of the children have begun to mature socially and have grown in their ability to interact with each other. The weeks of experience together contributes to this. There is some primitive interaction and the adults in the class encourage learnings in interpersonal relationships as the children play.

In summary, ten mothers and their toddlers enter a class looking for social experience with peers and information on child rearing. After a period of seven weekly sessions the close bonding of parents makes the influenceability of a Mother-Toddler Group potentially great. A cohesive group of individuals has formed with comfortable social relationships and a source of learnings and support. There also exists for the mothers a setting in which interests and concerns about child rearing can be explored and new parenting skills discovered.

Sources of Curriculum

A Mother-Toddler Class by definition is one wherein children are present. Much content for discussion comes from what is observed as they play. Subjects often brought up for discussion in this way are: how to handle a child

who grabs or hits others, how to encourage cooperative play, setting limits, how to deal with a child who constantly says "no." Parent Observation Classes sponsored by the Los Angeles City Schools sometimes follow this pattern (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971) as do many other groups (Institute of Child Study, University of Texas, 1956). The mothers in the class or other attending adults often supply content from their own experiences. Goller (1955) found that parent discussion groups can be conducted with material soley from the parents. Some areas brought up for discussion in this way are: eating problems, sleep disturbances, changes in behavior, moving, new baby in the home, babysitters, grandparents, conflicts with spouses over how to handle the child, taking vacations, guilt and the difficulty in being with a toddler all day. Since the leader of a Mother-Toddler Group has the opportunity to chat informally with the parents during the first hour of class, she often finds questions or concerns around certain themes that parents feel reluctant about broaching to the whole group (masturbation, nudity, etc.). When this occurs I feel, as the discussion leader, the responsibility to introduce the subject as a possible area of discussion. Therefore the sources of content in the parent group discussion are the leader, the children, and the parents openly or in private.

Role of the Leader

The role of the leader in a parent discussion group is

defined in part in his or own beliefs about how individuals acquire knowledge and utilize it. Auerbach (1954) and Cheavens (1958) present a model which I have personally adopted and adapted for my own use. The participants in a discussion, after being presented with a problem or situation, share their views and develop their own solutions. The leader can attempt to equalize participation by asking broad questions calling for different points of view. Inherent in this approach is the belief that each individual has the right to make his or her own decisions. A group leader, in a Mother-Toddler Group, does act as a resource for the group. Mothers do come with questions and they approach the leader as an expert in the field of Early Childhood who has answers to their inquiries. Hopefully, the teacher is knowledgeable in child development, family relations and the psychodynamics of human behavior. My own experiences in these areas is called on constantly in each Mother-Toddler Group discussion as parents ask for data and factual knowledge in the areas of human behavior. Evaluating the situation I follow the pattern set forth by Auerbach (1954). Information from reputable sources is shared as is my opinion as another point of view. At times I turn the discussion back to the group itself. The goal in this model is "...to direct the group's thinking back to development of their ability to find their own answers, answers which are right for them." (Auerbach, 1954).

The leader's role in a Mother-Toddler Group changes as

the parents' needs change. At first parents come to expose their children to what they hope is an ideal teacher, one who is kind, understanding and resourceful in ways that will help a child learn and grow. To the parents themselves the teacher is the expert, the authority, the ideal mother with knowledge and experience they have not yet acquired. As each new mother joins the group I again find myself in the position of being asked the requirements, rules and limits overtly and covertly. I assume the role of providing structure for new parents because I feel it gives a new member in an established group the security and the chance to relax and be themselves. As the group evolves and parents have attended about six sessions the rules no longer seem important; the people become important. Each parent assumes his or her status as an equal partner in deciding what is best for the class. The parents take a leadership role and often assume some of the mechanical responsibilities such as deciding who brings snack next week, or rearranging equipment for different or safer use. The class becomes theirs and with it one can see the relaxation and comfort that familiarity brings. The mothers relate warmly to each other; they are more decisive with their children, and there is clearer, respectful communication taking place between adults and between adults and children. These conditions are part of what Coopersmith (1967) feels are essential to an individual's good feelings about himself. This heightening of parental self-esteem coupled with the

learnings of interpersonal dynamics and child development is hopefully reflected in what I believe is more competent parenting.

Chapter 7: CONCLUSIONS

Examination of Mother-Toddler Groups through both academic research and practical experience has yielded information and also raised questions about this new form of parent education. In conclusion, I have summarized five areas of discovery and inquiry:

1. There exists a lack of literature on the subject.
2. There are unique problems working in Mother-Toddler Groups.
3. There are important issues for further examination.
4. Mother-Toddler Groups are a needed source of Early Parent Education.
5. There are some basic requirements for Mother-Toddler program sources.

1. Lack of Literature on Mother-Toddler Groups

On reviewing the available literature on the subject of early parent education, one is struck by the scant amount of material available on Mother-Toddler Groups. There is information on groups as social, psychological and interpersonal dynamic phenomena, but this refers in general to therapeutic groups for adults. Although much that takes place within any group is universal, Mother-Toddler Groups are characterized by phenomena that are, as yet, relatively unexplored or unscrutinized by researchers, professionals, or other workers in the field. Groups of parents have

been brought together in an effort to explore the common problems of living with children who are handicapped either physically or emotionally. Various supportive institutions have urged this type of group participation in order to help parents cope with their unique problems. As yet, very little information exists on programs for interested parents or for professionals wishing to help parents experiencing concerns with the normal period of toddlerhood.

2. Unique Problems Working with Mother-Toddler Groups

Working with mothers and toddlers requires focus on the mother, the child, and on the unit they form together. The leader of such a group serves the members in various capacities: a teacher, a model, an authority, a leader, and a resource person.

Mothers of diverse backgrounds and experiences and of varying beliefs come to the group with individual expectations. A leader must meet each individual with a firm philosophy and belief about Early Childhood. This philosophy is the base from which his or her approach to leading such groups must come. The interactions in the setting of the group meetings contribute to the content in this form of early parent education and the leader must be knowledgeable about early childhood and sensitive to mothers' feelings in order to draw out the content most appropriate for each group.

Since children are present during the discussion period, the leader needs to be aware of their possible intrusion on mothers physically and emotionally. Therefore, the particular style of a mother's participation and the breadth and depth of involvement in discussion must be examined carefully and not judged harshly.

The toddlers as as members of a sub-group in childhood possess characteristics and behaviors unique and for the most part undefined for many parents. Parents come to such groups looking for knowledge and understanding of their children who have recently begun to walk and get into things. The leader, as an authority, often needs to interpret what is taking place in this stage of a child's development and explain what happens in the interaction between parent and child. The leader of a Mother-Toddler Group through the content she offers in play equipment, art and music activities, and group experiences also demonstrates the growing capabilities of a very young child. Parents often baffled by the inwardly motivated behavior exhibited by toddlers are comforted and reassured by positive accomplishments and capabilities displayed by their children in a Mother-Toddler Group.

Content brought up for discussion must be managed with educative procedures unless the leader has some clinical experience and training to lead the group toward more therapeutic goals. This entails maintaining discussion among the adults on the conscious level of perception.

The motivation for certain actions or responses in parents might be probed with questions calling for self-reflection but interpretations by the leader of what she perceives as taking place on an unconscious level are best left for a therapeutic setting. Examination of conscious or near-conscious control of behavior is the educational technique most appropriate in the Mother-Toddler Group. Since most of these groups function in an educational setting (pre-schools) the leader has the responsibility of recognizing her limits as defined by the definition of the group.

3. Issues for Further Examination

From time to time it is important in any program for leaders to sit back and reflect on what is taking place. One purpose of taking such an objective view is to evaluate what is happening in order to determine what changes might be needed. For the purposes of this study, evaluations of the Illustrative Program were made via three Information Surveys applied by the leader. The surveys were meant to gauge the program success and further curriculum needs. The parents responded willingly yet questions came to mind regarding these surveys as authentic evaluative instruments. Parents involved in Mother-Toddler Groups form a close friendly relationship with the leader. It is possible that information asked for (such as the Information Surveys) becomes less valid when asked for by the leader of the group. Therefore, it is important that the responses be examined in light of this. Ideally, independent, outside researchers

would be better prepared to construct and apply valid evaluative instruments for Mother-Toddler Groups.

In order to evaluate any such Mo her-Toddler Group each aspect of the program should be opened for scrutiny. Some issues related to group settings, group size and leadership style need further exploration.

The groups I have personally led and from which I gathered much information for this work are all set in white, middle-class communities. Even though I believe the key issues in education for child rearing are universal, it would be interesting to offer such groups in a variety of ethnic, social, and economic settings to explore what variations might be helpful to mothers and children.

My own style requires a group no larger than ten mothers and their children. But the issue remains whether larger groups could be feasible utilizing several leaders. A Mother-Toddler Group herein described is but one format possible in group education for parents and very young children.

Preparation of leaders for such groups requires training and experience in Early Childhood education, individual psychodynamics and family dynamics. A setting and curriculum which includes all these disciplines needs to be made available to those wishing to enter the field. As yet training of this type is yet to be established in one location. The possibility of establishing specific programs for leaders of Mother-Toddler Groups should be

examined.

The altruistic rewards of leading Mother-Toddler Groups are many, and the work enlightening, however, leaders ought to be aware of at least two potential pitfalls.

First, when members who are friends prior to the group enter the class together their friendship sometimes interferes with their participation in the group as individuals. Based on my experience, it is my belief that certain members of the group who were part of such friendships were inhibited or in other ways restrained from full and personal participation in group discussions because of their prior intimate relationship with other members of the group.

Second, the leader must be aware that from time to time mothers may be going through a trying period and wish to utilize the group as a sounding board for a ventilation of personal dissatisfaction. This can be an appropriate use of the group when it serves as a release from tension for the mother. Strong expression of emotions can enhance the development of cohesiveness in a group and mutually experienced feelings can be productive as therapeutic factors in interpersonal learning. It is essential that the leader be able to lead a group to utilize such incidents for learning and to understand such therapeutic factors as important. It appears important to me that a leader have some clinical experience in therapeutic technique in order

to apply such opportunities to all the group members as a learning situation. It is questionable in my mind whether an untrained person will know his or her own bounds and understand the point at which discussion in some areas needs to be deemed inappropriate and thus terminated because of the setting or because personal qualifications are limiting.

4. Mother-Toddler Groups as a Needed Source of Parent Education

I have found that both academic research and practical experience indicate that parent education can be most effective through group process. A unique group, in which mothers and toddlers come together can be of great assistance in aiding young parents learning about parenting and about the development of the very young child. Through the work involved in this thesis I have found that premonitions I had about possible anxiety that accompanies parenting especially parenting for the first time, were verified.

I determined that a Mother-Toddler Group can be a valid form of parent education. I also reaffirmed that parents need someone to turn to as a resource for information related to child rearing. Furthermore, the instant acceptance and growth of the groups has indicated that parent education needs are not being adequately met.

First, my hunches about first-time parents were verified. Young parents do have worries and concerns about their children and about their own capacity to parent.

Parenthood is a difficult undertaking and coping with the arrival of a first child puts a great deal of pressure on a young family. Many young couples wishing to do a good job are not too accepting of old ideas coming from people whose thinking, in their opinion, is outdated. Many young couples wishing to be independent or because of work commitments, move away from their families. As a result, they find themselves in strange communities isolated and without sources for answers or advice on parenting which traditionally came via the extended family.

Second, the utilization of a group setting is well suited to parent education. A Mother-Toddler Group brings parents together at one of the crucial times in a child's development. When a young child reaches a stage where his behavior begins to be autonomous, many parents become baffled and are confused about how to react and set limits for the newly mobile child. Mothers seeing their child with others exhibiting similar behavior are comforted by the universality of what they are experiencing. A Mother-Toddler Class which meets regularly brings the opportunity for routine contact between parents of young children. A discussion group offers a forum wherein the exchange of information on child development and the experiences of raising children can aid parents in developing their own ideas of parenting. Parents need to be aware of alternatives in child rearing so that they can develop a style that is comfortable for them and one which is appropriate

for their child.

Lastly, parents need contact with someone who is knowledgeable in the area of child development. This relationship offers a resource for information about the natural way childhood procedes. A teacher who has experience with young parents and their children offers reliable information related to parenting. An individual who has skills in group and interpersonal dynamics encourages parents to utilize interpersonal relationships with other mothers and fathers in solving problems related to child rearing. Also, being in touch with someone who understands the agonies and ecstacies of parenting and who can be sympathetic and non-judgmental can be a great source of comfort and reassurance to young mothers and fathers.

Responses to the three Information Surveys plus the faithful attendance of mothers and their children in these groups indicates this method of Parent Education has clear potential for alleviating a yet unanswered need in young parents.

5. Some Basic Requirements for Program Success

Mother-Toddler Groups are a form of parent education not yet tested by time. An essential factor in initiating such a program is that it be in a setting (school or clinic) whose leadership believes in the value of such programs.

Thus, important support and credence are given to the innovative Mother-Toddler program.

Guidelines should be established limiting the number of visitors to a Mother-Toddler Group. The length of any visit should be pre-determined since outsiders sitting in on discussion groups are considered an intrusion.

Two leaders or one leader and a trained assistant provide the most effective guidance for a Mother-Toddler Group. In order to maintain high program standards, two trained leaders must be available for each ten mother-child dyads. The needs of twenty individuals need to be met and a program of education administered. This cannot be accomplished successfully without sufficient and appropriately trained staff.

Teachers trained to lead Mother-Toddler Groups should be sensitive to children, to mothers (and fathers) and to the interaction between them. Leaders must be conscious of their own feelings toward the individual members of the group and be able to clarify their own personal impressions apart from professional perceptions of each parent and child.

Furthermore, it should be understood by all members of the group that the leaders are trustworthy and will keep the content of any discussion private and confidential.

Interest in toddlers and their parents is growing rapidly within the field of Early Childhood Education and in clinical settings. Hopefully, this thesis will add to

the growing body of knowledge about parents and children between the ages of one and three. This work is also an endeavor to encourage others to enter the field in order to teach, inquire, evaluate or in other ways add to information and understanding related to a fascinating area of human activity.

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Appendix a.

PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TODDLER GROUP PROGRAM AT ADAT ARI EL

Toddlers can be pleasurable and difficult almost at the same time. Parents are constantly baffled by the meaning of what their young child is doing or saying. Regular contact with someone who is a professional in the field of Early Childhood can be helpful in interpreting what is happening as children interact in a play setting. Parents observing their child at play with others can sometimes use the assurance that what is taking place is part of natural growth and development.

A Toddler Group Program wherein mothers and their children meet with an individual, knowledgeable and experienced in the field of Early Childhood, once a week for two hours, can be one way of giving parents and children the means of being together to observe and learn from one another.

A pre-school setting, such as the existing Adat Ari El Nursery School, with some additional equipment such as some age-appropriate toys (the children involved will be two year-olds) is ideal. Such a setting is spacious, suitably scaled to the size of very young children, and pleasantly child-like. Indoor and outdoor facilities would be available to allow for a maximum number of opportunities to experience a broad play environment.

Mothers should be allowed to be present at all times

so that both they and their children can see each other and yet be free to distance themselves for some experience in independence.

One goal of such a Toddler Group would be to build to a program where the mothers involved will have some time, relatively uninterrupted by children, to spend with the professional leader. The professional would use this time to lead discussions in all aspects of child development and parenting. However, recognizing the facts that young children find it hard to be away from their mothers with another caretaker, and that mothers need to feel trust in someone new caring for their children, enough time has to be allowed for a comfortable separation of this type to to take place. The subject matter discussed at any such Toddler Group would grow naturally out of what is observed as the children play and from needs the mothers themselves express.

For the greatest amount of safety and program success two professionals (or one professional and one trained assistant) need to be available for each eight mothers and their children.

Bringing mothers and their children together in a Jewish setting where family life is revered can offer an opportunity to share the concerns, experiences, and joys of motherhood. The group experience can help mothers gain a positive view of themselves and their children.

ADAT
ARI EL
Formerly Valley Jewish Community Center and Temple

July 8, 1974

Dear Friends:

The Adat Ari El Religious School is pleased to announce the establishment of a Toddler Group Program for pre-nursery age children (15 to 30-months) and their mothers. The program will be held on Mondays, 10:00 A.M. to 12 Noon, starting September 9th. Enrollment fee: $15.00 per month. Group size will be limited.

The program will be open to both members and non-members and we would appreciate your informing your neighbors and friends of this opportunity. Interested parents should return the bottom portion of this letter by mail.

Sincerely,

Education Department

To: Adat Ari El Nursery School
5540 Laurel Canyon Boulevard
North Hollywood, Cal. 91607

We are interested in the Adat Ari El Toddler Program. Please mail us a registration form.

Name of Parents_____

Address_____
Street City Zip Code

Phone _____

Child's name_____ Birthdate:_____

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TODDLER GROUP PROGRAM AT ADAT ARI EL

Toddlers can be pleasurable and difficult almost at the same time. Parents are constantly baffled by the meaning of what their young child is doing or saying. Regular contact with someone who is a professional in the field of Early Childhood can be helpful in interpreting what is happening as children interact in a play setting. Parents observing their child at play with others can sometimes use the assurance that what is taking place is part of natural growth and development.

A Toddler Group Program wherein mothers and their children meet with an individual, knowledgeable and experienced in the field of Early Childhood, once a week for two hours, can be one way of giving parents and children the means of being together to observe and learn from one another. The pre-school setting at Adat Ari El Nursery School is ideal. The indoor and outdoor facilities are available to allow for a maximum number of opportunities to experience a broad play environment.

The participating mothers will have some time, relatively uninterrupted by children, to spend with the professional leader and discuss all aspects of child development.

Bringing mothers and their children together in a Jewish setting where family life is revered will offer an opportunity to share the concerns, experiences and joys of motherhood. The group experience will help mothers gain a positive view of themselves and their children.

Appendix c.

Condensed Log

The following is a condensation of the log of a Mother-Toddler Discussion Group. The group began with eight women; then at the third session three more members were added. From time to time husbands were in attendance with or without their wives. There were also occasions when grandparents were present.

The group met at Temple Adat Ari El weekly as part of an on-going class in parent education. Eight of the eleven women were first time mothers. All were college graduates. One woman was taking college classes for pleasure, one woman was writing a Doctoral thesis, and one woman was attending law school. Three husbands were lawyers and one (a teacher) was attending law school. Of the seven remaining fathers' occupations there was one psychologist, one architect, one radiologist, one who owned a pharmacutical laboratory, two who were in business and one whose work was unknown to us. Each set of parents had been married for at least four years and all the children had been born in California.

Session 1

Five out of eight mothers who had signed up came to this first session. Mothers were asked to sit near their children and allow them to explore the toys and art materials we had out. Mothers seemed anxious about their children performing properly. They checked with the teachers about how many pieces of paper to use and the right ways of playing with certain toys. The children stayed near their mothers and explored with their hands and mouths as children this age do. We introduced ourselves,

informally, and some of the mothers asked where the others lived and how old their children were. Mothers seemed pleased with the way the classroom was set up and the variety of materials and toys available.

Session 2

Seven out of the eight mothers came and they asked how big the group would be. We explained that we felt about ten members would work best. There were new introductions and the mothers who had been present last week moved around with their children a little more. Mothers asked if they could have each others phone numbers and I agreed to make up a roster. The mothers also asked about snack time. It was agreed that each mother would take a turn and bring in something healthy for a snack rather than 'treats.'

Session 3

During the week there had been many new inquiries about the Mother-Toddler Class. Three new mothers were enrolled by the secretary not realizing we had limited the group to ten members. Ten out of eleven mothers came. Some of the mothers who had already attended three weeks wanted a discussion session and felt their children would be comfortable with Soni. Jenny talked about her daughter Mary having a tantrum. She and her husband had been panicked about what to do. After forty-five minutes the pediatrician suggested taking Mary to the Emergency Hospital. By the time the family had arrived, Mary stopped. Mother admitted hoping that the reason for Mary's behavior was physical out of fear that she had done something damaging emotionally in her interaction with Mary. When we looked at the events prior to Mary's tantrum a clearer picture began to unfold. Mother had been sick and had stayed in bed while father took care of Mary. Essentially she was there to wave at but unavailable. Also Mary had been left with a new babysitter. Also, mother had been saying 'no' and Mary had been upset. We talked about feelings of being out of control and what might be the best way of handling a child who has reached the point of hysterics. We did this by exploring what we might wish to have done to us if we felt out of control. Mothers also shared some of the things they do for relaxation. Some are going to school, some have hobbies. There were a couple (Judy, Nicole) who have no interests outside their homes and children.

Session 4

In following up last week's discussion of tantrums I asked Jenny how things had gone during the week. She said our

discussion about sharing true feelings with our children really helped and when Mary did get out of control again she was able to hold her and calm her down. She said she had kept talking and Mary seemed to understand. Judy asked about discipline and 'spoiling' a child. She asks a lot of questions in and out of the discussion group. It's hard to really find out what she really wants. Lenny, her son, got very upset during snack time. We helped her work it out. Essentially, he wanted to unwrap a piece of cheese himself but Judy doesn't seem able to tune in on what he is trying to communicate to her. Olive asked about children getting 'over excited.' When we pursued this it became clear that Milly, her daughter, was attempting to behave more autonomously and getting herself and her parents all worked up. Soni and I both tried talking to Ellen who does not pay enough attention to Peter's safety; he does wander off if the gate is open and it is usually someone else who notices him going. Ellen is enraptured of her son and when she does bring him back from wandering off she hugs and kisses him while telling him how bad he is.

Session 5

With four mothers absent the smaller group made a very relaxed, quiet morning. Children moved easily from one activity to another. Soni and I were able to spend more time with individual mothers. We both tried to move in more with Ellen who is still not very watchful of Peter. When we seem to get through to her she will grab him and smother him with kisses telling us how wonderful he is. Judy is having a very hard time. She has a three month old infant who is getting her up at night. Although she has help in the house full time she doesn't seem to get any time for herself. She usually comes in late and we took time together to watch exactly what Lenny does. He checked out the whole room: rattling the bird cage, grabbing toys from other children, painted on someone's painting, knocking a chair over. His mother cornered Beverly, who also has a young infant, and spilled out all her problems. Beverly says this happens on the phone too. When Lenny realized his mother was not available he started to throw chairs right near her so that she finally responded. We had been watching him and seeing that he did not hurt anyone but during the discussion we tried to establish the expectation that during class time the mothers were to be available to their children and Lenny especially needed this.

Session 6

Mothers and children are now greeting each other like old

friends. The first hour is very relaxed and all the mothers are enjoying their children. Soni and I are able to get around and attend to them quite a bit. Beverly has decided that Lynn is really ready for pre-school (she's right) and will be leaving our group. Judy cornered other mothers today with her tales of woe; they are very sympathetic. Some mothers asked if we could have coffee available and Simone asked about a potty chair since she had begun toilet training Kim. We said we would make these things available. We talked about toilet training and many mothers expressed how apprehensive they were about it.

Session 7

I came in late because one of my children was ill. We talked about feelings a mother has when her child is ill. Jenny and Rochelle admitted that they panic when their children get sick. In some way they feel they have failed to keep them healthy. Sue talked about separation problems she was having with her four-year-old and we talked generally about separation and what it means to children.

Session 8

The mothers shared their different Thanksgiving experiences with their families. They enjoyed being with loved ones but Olive and Rochelle felt that it was too overwhelming for their children and found the whole experience trying. They shared how hard it is to enjoy yourself with a little one around. Jenny and Simone talked about missing Beverly. Both expressed feelings of envy since they feel their children are still so young and dependent. Rochelle talked for quite a while about how differently she and her husband feel about child rearing and how frustrated she gets. Her husband seems unusually over-protective of Lenny. Lenny does get very "high" sometimes when he is excited. Soni has noticed too. Rochelle wants to take a weekend vacation but her husband is very distrustful about who cares for Lenny. The group was sympathetic and supportive of her.

Session 9

Rochelle was absent. Jenny had talked to her and said Lenny was sick and Rochelle's husband was very upset. We talked about bringing sick children to class. Everyone had something to say about it. I feel sure at this point that the mothers would question one another freely if they thought someone had brought a sick child. Ellen told us she will be going to Israel for about five weeks and would have to miss class. Olive asked about explaining sex to a four-year-old. We talked for a while about how

to handle the explanation of sex. Olive and Sue who both have older children said their children had asked sooner than they had anticipated. The mothers shared how prepared or unprepared they had been as young children and the shock oflearning about sex. I steered the conversation around to how they might want this handled for their children, who would do it, and when. We talked about when vocabulary can be introduced. How genital manipulation is not unusual even in toddlers. Some of the mothers said that their children had handled their genitals and they had not been sure what to do. We then talked about the fact that we and our spouses need to feel comfortable about our chosen amount of nudity and privacy as a guide to how much explanation might be needed for each family.

Session 10

Today Laurie came back and brought her grandfather. Her mother has been taking exams. Mr. C. played with Laurie beautifully and even changed her diaper. I asked how he felt about it all. He enjoys taking care of his grandchildren; he had done it with his own children privately because he felt embarrassed. He said he envied the young fathers of today since it was okay to help one's wife taking care of children. The mothers found this surprising since they did not experience their husbands as helpful. Judy felt it was all her responsibility and Betty took exception to this. Some mothers were angry saying they had tried and wished their husbands would do more. Betty, Sue and Simone said it could be done and explained how they discussed with their husbands and worked out some sharing of responsibilities. We also talked about toilet training again.

Session 11

We talked about communicating with the children, by talking and showing them what we mean. We also discussed how to look for a nursery school and what kinds of questions to ask when visiting them. Simone and Kim will be leaving our class. We talked about how we would say goodbye and how important it is for all the children to participate in saying hello and goodbye. We also looked at Kim who is two years, eleven months and at how ready she is to handle a pre-school situation without her mother. We had the potty chair and Jimmy sat on it. There was also discussion among the mothers who have careers or who are studying about the conflicts they experience leaving their children (Sue, Betty, Olive and Sandra). Also we talked about aggression among the children and about beginning to let the children handle their own conflicts, supporting

them, but not encouraging them to give in in order to keep peace.

Session 12

Mothers talked about missing class last week. Also some of the children asked about Kim who now goes to nursery school. We discussed helping the children communicating with each other. I explained how it is important at this point for the children to feel their parents support and help in holding on to what they want or getting things from other people.

Session 13

Marilyn and Andrea joined the class today. They stayed close to their children and behaved much the same way that our 'old' mothers had done at the beginning. The mothers were all very helpful in helping Marilyn and Andrea adjust. Marilyn seems to want something more intellecturally stimulating in all areas; I wonder if this class has what she requires. Andrea shared an experience that she'd had with another woman. Eddie, her son, had hit another child. The child's mother had attacked Andrea for having such an aggressive child. Andrea had felt helpless. The other mothers were supportive and angry at the other woman. They discussed ways of handling this type of situation.

Session 14

This was Olive and Milly's last session. Milly will start nursery school. Olive shared what she had found out by visiting different schools and how good she felt about the school she had chosen for Milly. Olive has to have time to complete her Doctoral thesis and this in part prompted her to start Milly in nursery school. She took a little time to talk about missing everyone -- then into how she anticipated Milly's transfer into pre-school. We all talked again about separation and how to help children make adjustments to changes in their lives.

Session 15

We all missed Olive and Milly. Mothers talked a great deal about handling conflicts between children especially since Dorothy (Angela's daughter), Jimmy, Mary and Benjie are starting to know and use the word "mine." We talked about supporting the children in their feelings about possession and ownership as a prerequisite to sharing which comes later. Marilyn wanted to talk about subjects unrelated to child rearing but the other mothers told her

that they felt this was the main purpose of coming. Some of the parents are beginning to get together with and without their children outside class time. We talked about visiting each others homes with children and setting limits and who makes the rules. Betty's mother came in with Johnny today because Betty is taking a class on the morning we meet. (I spoke to Betty during the week and because her mother only takes care of Johnny one day a week I was concerned that the family might not be able to take full advantage of what the program offered. Betty said she would talk it over with Jack, her husband, and let me know what they decided to do). Ellen came back from Israel and had lots to share about her experiences travelling with a toddler.

Session 16

Marilyn came to the group to share that she had decided to drop out. She said she had found a consciousness raising group with child-care that meets on the same morning as we do. Since her daughter, Dorothy, will be ready for pre-school soon she decided that right now she wanted something for herself. Many of the mothers empathized with her; some felt she should stay, but all respected her decision. Jack, Betty's husband, brought Johnny this morning. Since Betty is going to class he will be bringing Johnny except for some mornings when he has to be in court. He was a welcome addition since Dick, Sandra's husband, was also present. Both fathers added to the discussion on sleep problems which Jack brought up. Nicole and Andrea said they had some difficulties putting their children to bed. We talked about how a child feels when he is put to bed and the grownups are still up. We also talked about dreaming and nightmares and how to handle them.

Session 17

During the week I had called Judy to make a referral for her to the Thalians PIPS. She had contacted them and decided to try the Toddler Program there. I told her I would hold her place. Some of the children asked about Dorothy and again we talked about how to help children separate. We are getting lots of practice in saying goodbye to friends. Also some of the mothers asked about Judy's absence. They were relieved to hear that I had sought some extra help for her. Andrea brought up the subject of eating problems and her concern about Eddie. This soon turned to her anxiety about the impending birth of her second child. Nicole could relate to this since she is due soon too. Jack announced that Betty is pregnant so the subject of second children and the adjustment

of the first became the focus of the morning.

Session 18

A mother visited the class today and I noticed for the first time how stifling it is to our discussions. After she left Rochelle confessed how she had been spanking Jimmy and how bad she felt about it. She seemed very upset and frustrated about having to keep close watch on Jimmy for her husband's peace of mind. One of the mothers suggested she and her husband might need some extra help to work things out. They all understood how hard it is to be in all day with toddlers but also found it difficult to face the fact that there are parents who spank and possibly beat their children.

Session 19

I spoke to Rochelle during the week in an effort to see if she would be interested in a referral. She said she appreciated the concern but her husband did not feel there was any problem. I suggested she might check with her pediatrician on Jimmy's tendancy to get 'high' at times; just to be on the safe side. Andrea had her baby last week and came back today feeling good. The mothers were very impressed with the fact that she had delivered her daughter only ten days before. Nicole was very envious since her child will be delivered via Caesarian Section.

Session 20

Jenny's husband, Bill, came today. Jenny is thinking about going back to work and the discussion revolved around when the best time is to leave a child for long periods of time each day. Dick and Jack were present and they added a great deal from the husband's point of view. Rochelle said she had taken Jimmy to the pediatrician and that the doctor felt he was alright. Jack shared how guilty he feels when he says no to Johnny and then Johnny cries. Many of the mothers were able to empathize with him. It's nice to have a man who can share these kinds of feelings so openly.

Session 21

Nicole told us she will be having her baby delivered on the week-end. Many mothers offered to call and help out as much as she wanted. She really felt good about the group. Sandra and Dick both came with Laurie today. It's interesting to see how differently Laurie behaves with each parent. We talked about experiences with pediatri-

cians and how mothers depend on them and are so often disappointed. Johnny and Benjie got into a fight over a toy and I was able to demonstrate how to help the children sort things out. We talked about respecting each child's feelings and how to help them express themselves.

Session 22

Matt (Nicole's husband) brought Benjie today. Nicole had delivered her second son over the weekend. The mothers were glad things had gone well. Matt played beautifully with Benjie; it was a pleasure to see. Matt shared how hard it was for him at home without a wife. His mother-in-law is helping them but Benjie misses his mother and the grandmother is hurt because Benjie cannot accept her. We all shared sympathies with Matt and suggested he send his mother-in-law next week. Some of the mothers asked about Judy and I told them she is trying the group at PIPS and that I would keep them informed. Our snack included Matzos today and the children had a fine time spreading peanut butter on them themselves.

Session 23

Benjie came today with his grandmother and all the mothers were helpful in explaining how hard it is for a toddler to be without his mother. They also talked about how much their own mothers had or had not been of help and how gratifying it must be that Nicole had a mother who was willing to do so much. Eddie bit Johnny's hand today. We decided that Johnny is too immature to really understand what's going on. We decided that we would try and watch him more closely and Andrea would show her disapproval as best she could. She was very embarrassed and willing to try anything to rectify what had happened. The mothers (especially Betty) were very understanding and supportive. Dick and Sandra came and said they would be studying for the Bar Exam and that they would be dropping out of the group.

Session 24

Dick, Sandra and Laurie all came to say goodbye. They were all quite upset about leaving. Sandra was worried about what they would be missing especially since Laurie is beginning to show interest in toilet training. We talked about sometimes giving up things in order to gain something else. She is determined to finish school and Dick is very supportive of her. Jack said he would miss the other regular father in the group. Judy returned and made an entrance about halfway through the morning. I feel the group welcomed her with mixed feelings. She had

attended the PIPS Toddler Group twice and had dropped out because Lenny was ill.